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Contents

June 2014

SPECIAL REPORTS

24 **BIG READ: How to join the big beasts of Europe's coaching elite**

94 **Champions League Final** Plus, Europe's top 33 leagues analysed and our players of the season

WORLD CUP STARS

53 **Exclusive interview special**
Face to face with 32 World Cup stars, plus each country's official 32-man squad: who's in, who's out?

54 Algeria
55 Argentina
56 Australia
57 Belgium
58 Bosnia-Herzegovina
59 Brazil
60 Cameroon
60 Chile
62 Colombia
63 Costa Rica
64 Croatia
65 Ecuador
66 England
67 France
68 Germany
69 Ghana
70 Greece
71 Holland
72 Honduras
72 Iran
74 Italy
75 Ivory Coast
76 Japan
77 Mexico
78 Nigeria
79 Portugal
80 Russia
81 South Korea
82 Spain
83 Switzerland
84 Uruguay
86 USA

Dispatches

Exclusive reports from our worldwide network of correspondents

30 **Spain** Atletico dominate at home
32 **Argentina** the return of River Plate
33 **Brazil** losing in the Libertadores
34 **Italy** violence scars Cup Final
36 **Holland** four on the trot for Ajax
37 **Portugal** Benfica set for golden era
38 **England** City pounce as Liverpool slip
40 **Russia** CSKA win in dramatic finale
41 **Australia** three in four for Roar
42 **Germany** Pep proves he has a plan B
44 **Belgium** Anderlecht title not straightforward
45 **Vatican City** football and the Holy See
46 **France** money matters in Ligue 1

THE WORLD THIS MONTH

People in the news...on and off the pitch

4 **In pictures**
10 **From the editor**
11 **ESM Golden Shoe**
14 **Keir Radnedge** FIFA's fall guy
16 **Obituaries**
17 **Paul Gardner** cheats do prosper
18 **Ins & Outs** people on the move
20 **Brian Glanville** a plague on the game

TACTICS

48 **Real Madrid star Angel Di Maria**

GREAT TEAMS

122 **Argentina 1978**

World Service

The ultimate global news and results section

92 Internationals
94 Digest
108 Club results

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See page 50.

In Pictures

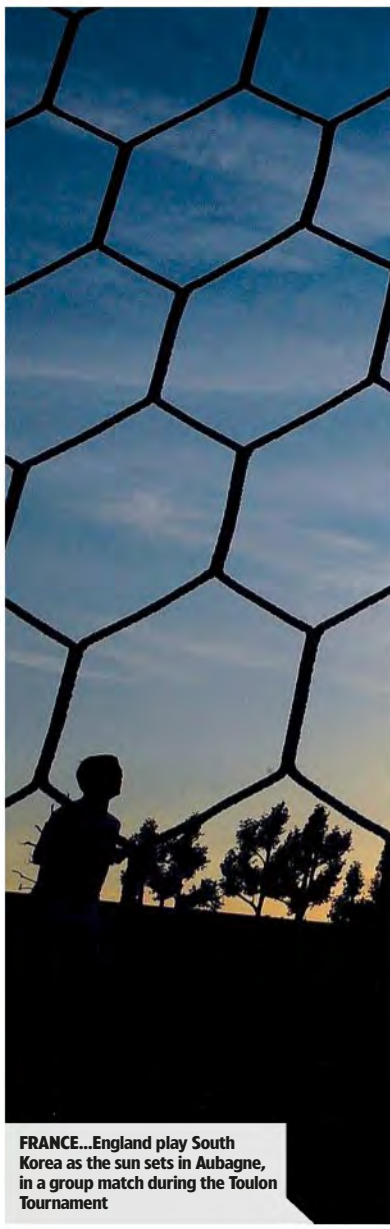
The global game caught on camera

PORTUGAL...Sergio Ramos celebrates scoring the equalising goal, for Real Madrid against Atletico, in the third minute of added time in the Champions League Final

ENGLAND...Olivier Giroud leads Arsenal down the Wembley steps with the FA Cup after his side beat Hull City 3-2 in the Final

AUSTRALIA...Besart Berisha of Brisbane Roar and Western Sydney Wanderers' Iacopo La Rocca do not see eye to eye in the A-League Grand Final

BRAZIL...Everton of Flamengo (right) battles with Paulo Miranda of Sao Paulo during a league game at the Maracana



FRANCE...England play South Korea as the sun sets in Aubagne, in a group match during the Toulon Tournament

ITALY...Palermo players celebrate after winning promotion as champions of Serie B

GERMANY...Bayern Munich coach Pep Guardiola gets showered in beer after his club's German Cup win against Borussia Dortmund

PICTURES OF THE MONTH QR CODE

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FROM THE EDITOR

GIANT POSTER
WORLD CUP 2014
BECKHAM UP THE AMAZON
THE SUNDAY TIMES
Plot to buy the World Cup
WORLD EXCLUSIVE
FIFA FILES
BRIBES, BUNGS AND SLUSH FUNDS

Corruption revelations... *Sunday Times'* FIFA story

As this edition of *World Soccer* went to press, the *Sunday Times* published revelations about Qatar's 2022 World Cup bid. It was an astonishing piece of journalism and one that deserves to send shockwaves through FIFA.

By the time you read this, further stories may have emerged about corruption by Qatari official Mohamed Bin Hammam and others. However, they will not alter the central narrative of the story – the endemic corrupting culture that has permeated throughout FIFA, right to the very top.

> All the evidence suggests that Sepp Blatter's FIFA is not fit for purpose

How Sepp Blatter's organisation reacts to the growing evidence of corruption at its core will determine not only whether Qatar is stripped of the 2022 finals but also whether FIFA can continue as a credible administrative body.

All the evidence suggests that Blatter's FIFA is not fit for purpose.

Blatter has hidden behind the investigation by American lawyer Michael Garcia. He could yet come out of this whole sordid affair smelling of roses – if he manages to pin the blame on others, as he has done in the past.

The crisis over Qatar is only half of the problem that FIFA faces. If, as long suspected, Qatar won the 2022 bid by foul means, questions must also be raised over the award of the 2018 finals to Russia, as both decisions were taken at the same time.

Yet FIFA has a president who refuses to acknowledge his role in the corruption of his closest allies, the likes of Bin Hammam, Jack Warner and Ricardo Teixeira. Blatter may not have been proved to be personally corrupt, but when he travels the world in a private jet, surrounded by bodyguards at five-star hotels and high-class restaurants, while claiming thousands in expenses and remunerated with a seven-figure salary, the lines between what is, and what is not corrupt, become extremely blurred.

Blatter behaves like of a head state but is subject to none of the accountability that national political leaders must face. Perhaps only when Blatter leaves FIFA, and root-and-branch reform can be introduced throughout the organisation, can football start to enjoy a world body that is fit for the 21st century.

• It is against this backdrop that the World Cup kicks off in Brazil. This month we feature interviews with the potential stars of the tournament, as well as an extensive review of the 2013-14 European season.

As always, this issue is also available in digital format, for the iPad, other tablets and smartphones.

Gavin Hamilton, Editor

10 SIGNIFICANT EVENTS THIS MONTH

1. Real Madrid win their 10th European Cup ..... page 94
2. Sevilla win the Europa League ..... page 96
3. Ronaldo and Suarez share the ESM Golden Shoe ..... page 11
4. Atletico Madrid win the Spanish league ..... page 30
5. Violence mars the Italian Cup Final ..... page 34
6. Manchester City pip Liverpool to the Premier League title ..... page 38
7. Pep Guardiola's first season in Germany ends in style ..... page 42
8. Paris Saint-Germain win another title in France ..... page 46
9. Falcao fails to recover from an injured knee in time to make Colombia's World Cup squad ..... page 62
10. Landon Donovan dropped from USA's World Cup squad ..... page 86

UPDATED WORLD CUP SQUADS

The digital edition of World Soccer's World Cup Special has been updated to feature the final 23-man squads, with all injured and dropped players removed, and their replacements added. It is available to all digital subscribers.

"We may be candidates but only if the rules change"

Talking about possible American interest in hosting the 2026 World Cup finals, US federation chief Sunil Gulati has two provisos: that the bidding process is more transparent and that the technical reports on the bids carry more weight

ESM GOLDEN SHOE

Suarez and Cristiano Ronaldo share goalscoring prize

Cristiano Ronaldo (*below, left*) of Real Madrid and Liverpool's Luis Suarez (*right*) are the joint winners of the ESM Golden Shoe 2013-14, the prize awarded to the top European league goalscorer.

Both players scored 31 league goals, three more than last year's winner Lionel Messi. They will each receive a trophy at separate presentation ceremonies later this year.

POSITION AND TEAM		GOALS*	PTS
1	**Cristiano Ronaldo** (Real Madrid)	31 x 2	62
	Luis Suarez (Liverpool)	31 x 2	62
3	**Lionel Messi** (Barcelona)	28 x 2	56
4	**Diego Costa** (Atletico Madrid)	27 x 2	54
5	**Jonatan Soriano** (Salzburg)	31 x 1.5	46.5
6	**Ciro Immobile** (Torino)	22 x 2	44
7	**Alfred Finnbogason** (Heerenveen)	29 x 1.5	43.5
8	**Daniel Sturridge** (Liverpool)	21 x 2	42
9	**Robert Lewandowksi** (B Dortmund)	20 x 2	40
	Jackson Martinez (Porto)	20 x 2	40
	Luca Toni (Verona)	20 x 2	40
	Yaya Toure (Manchester City)	20 x 2	40
13	**Alan** (Salzburg)	26 x 1.5	39
	Zlatan Ibrahimovic (Paris SG)	26 x 1.5	39
15	**Alexis Sanchez** (Barcelona)	19 x 2	38
	Carlos Tevez (Juventus)	19 x 2	38
17	**Mario Mandzukic** (Bayern Munich)	18 x 2	36
18	**Graziano Pelle** (Feyenoord)	23 x 1.5	34.5
19	**Sergio Aguero** (Manchester City)	17 x 2	34
	Karim Benzema (Real Madrid)	17 x 2	34
	Josip Drmic (Nuremberg)	17 x 2	34
	Gonzalo Higuain (Napoli)	17 x 2	34
	Antonio Di Natale (Udinese)	17 x 2	34
	Rodrigo Palacio (Internazionale)	17 x 2	34
	Wayne Rooney (Manchester United)	17 x 2	34

* Goals are multiplied by a factor of 1, 1.5 or 2 depending on the strength of the league. Further details at worldsoccer.com

HEROES & VILLAINS

Loyal servant...Zanetti has finally retired

JAVIER ZANETTI

Internazionale's 40-year-old defender retired following the 4-1 win against Lazio. He had been with the club for the last 19 years and amassed a total of 857 appearances, including 614 in Serie A.

MIRALEM PJANIC

Roma's Bosnian midfielder bought the entire medical stock of a pharmacy in Sarajevo and organised for supplies to be distributed to those affected by the country's worst flooding in living memory.

JELLE TEN ROUWELAAR

NAC's goalkeeper equalled the Eredivisie record for successive matches when he chalked up his 204th consecutive game – amounting to 18,360 minutes – in the last game of the season when his side lost 2-0 away to PSV. Ten Rouwelaar equalled the record of former Fortuna Sittard goalkeeper Ruud Hesp, who is now PSV's goalkeeping coach.

Record...Ten Rouwelaar

ROBERTO MANCINI

The Galatasaray coach claimed his sixth domestic cup win, with five different clubs in three different countries. He had previously been successful at Manchester City and Italian clubs Internazionale (twice), Lazio and Fiorentina.

ZENIT

The Russian club must play their first two home matches of next season behind closed doors after supporters invaded the pitch against Dynamo Moscow and one of them threw a punch at the visiting club's defender Vladimir Granat.

Invasion...the actions of Zenit fans have cost the club

DIMITRI SELUK

The Ukrainian agent was reported to be trying to engineer a move for his client, Yaya Toure, after Manchester City failed to make a suitable fuss of their £220,00-a-week midfielder on his 31st birthday.

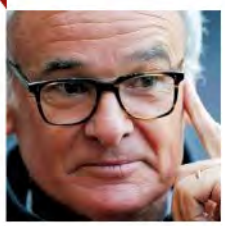
MARTIN SKRTEL

The Liverpool defender set a new Premier League record for own goals in a season when he put through his own net for the fourth time this term in his club's eventual 2-1 win against Newcastle United at Anfield.

LEANDRO ROMAGNOLI

The San Lorenzo playmaker, in his first game back following a four-match ban, was sent off just 17 minutes after coming on as a second-half substitute in his side's Libertadores Cup quarter-final second leg tie away to Cruzeiro.

Unhappy return...Romagnoli



"The rules should be respected. UEFA have clearly said that PSG have won without abiding by Financial Fairplay. Therefore, we are the rightful champions, having respected the rules"

Outgoing Monaco coach Claudio Ranieri protests at PSG's title victory

GOALS we'd like to see again

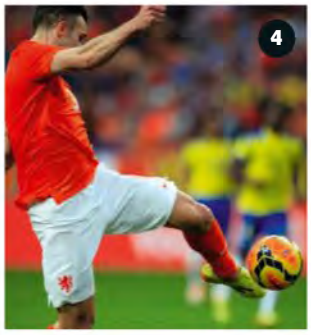
To see video footage of these goals, and many more that we have selected, scan the QR code using any free QR reader that can be downloaded to your smartphone. You can also see the videos by logging on to http://po.st/HcYdd9

1 ALEXIS SANCHEZ
Barcelona v Atletico
Shot to the near top corner from a tight angle.

2 YOSUKE ISHIBITSU
Kyoto Sanga v Yokohama
Having been awarded an indirect free-kick inside the penalty area, three Kyoto players run over the ball and sell the Yokohama goalkeeper a dummy before a fourth one taps it behind for the fifth player, Ishibitsu, to smash into the net.

3 HULK
Zenit v Kuban Krasnodar
Through one-on-one with the goalkeeper, Hulk produces two outrageous step-overs before calmly rounding his man and slotting home.

4 ROBIN VAN PERSIE
Holland v Ecuador
Latching on to a long pass from Jordy Clasie, he controls the ball on his chest before volleying home in one movement.



5 AARON RAMSEY
Arsenal v Hull City
Well-worked move, culminating in a fine back-heel assist from Olivier Giroud and a neat finish with the outside of the boot by Ramsey.

6 KOICHI APARICIO
Alianza Lima v San Martin
From the edge of the penalty area, Aparicio shows great technique to hit a swerving volley into the far corner.

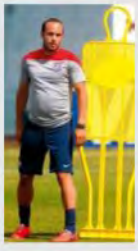
WINNERS

LUDOGORETS
Bulgarian double winners this season, they have won all bar one of the six major domestic trophies available to them since their first-ever promotion to the top flight in 2011.

AUCKLAND CITY
Will play in December's Club World Cup for a record sixth time after winning the OFC Champions League Final.

GORAN PANDEV
Was on the Italian Cup-winning team for the fourth time in six years as he helped Napoli beat Fiorentina in the Final.

ANZHI
The one-time big spenders of Russian football were relegated from the Premier League after a 1-0 defeat at Krasnodar.



LANDON DONOVAN
The 32-year-old USA star was a surprise omission from coach Jurgen Klinsmann's final squad of 23 for the World Cup.

EDINBURGH
The two professional clubs in Scotland's capital, Hearts and Hibernian, were both relegated from the top flight.

LOSERS

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THE INSIDER

FIFA fall guy Valcke will take the flak for World Cup protests

Jerome Valcke, outside Brazil, is seen as the enforcer driving lazy local organisers, kicking and screaming, to provide the minimal conditions necessary to stage the World Cup finals.

In Brazil, his image is different and he is portrayed as a rude Frenchman with little or no understanding of diplomacy and the local work culture.

Abroad, his ruthless honesty in saying, in 2012, that the Brazilians needed "a kick up the backside" was applauded as an administration of the shock treatment the hosts needed. But in Brazil his comments were considered an insult to the nation.

Nearly seven years into his high-pressure reign, Valcke would appear without challenge at FIFA in his role as secretary-general. But, if anything goes seriously wrong at the finals, then it is Valcke who will be blamed. Not the Brazilians. Not Blatter.

Valcke, while ferociously hard-working and energetic on FIFA's behalf, should take time out to watch his back. Such care and consideration might serve him profitably as the political manoeuvring gathers pace ahead of FIFA elections next year.

If Blatter, as expected, carries on for a further four-year term then Valcke expects to be secure. Although highly unlikely now, if Michel Platini were to take over then he would probably want to bring Gianni Infantino with him from UEFA and Valcke would find himself with the family time he has sacrificed for the World Cup operational cause in both 2010 and this year.

Not only must Valcke keep half an eye on the Brazilian project and on the Swiss political weather, he is now being targeted by a burgeoning campaign in the Brazilian media which can only fuel resentments which will drive the inevitable street protests expected during the World Cup. Investigative reporters have been digging deep into his past to check out every point of controversy, across his rise from junior reporter to TV executive and marketing specialist.

His rise and fall and rise again has been remarkable – both personally but also as an illustration of the challenge of walking the tightrope of power in sport.

He was, for example, a senior executive with a subsidiary agency of Canal Plus when the TV channel owned Paris Saint-Germain in the late 1990s; later PSG and senior officials were punished for using signing-on contracts and image rights deals to "hide" players' pay from the tax and social services authorities.

Protests...Valcke (left) will be blamed for any adverse publicity this summer

Valcke then headed a Vivendi team which undertook due diligence on the collapsed ISL as FIFA looked for a way out of commercial chaos.

Onward and upward. Further on, as has been well-documented, Valcke became head of FIFA marketing. This stint ended abruptly when he shouldered all the highly public blame for the messy, costly and ruthless decision to replace MasterCard as a World Cup sponsor with Visa.

Logic screams that such a decision could have been authorised only by the most senior figures within FIFA (ie president Blatter and finance chief Julio Grondona). Valcke was "merely" the fall guy and, initially, it appeared to the outside world as if he had fallen right out of the FIFA orbit.

In fact, he had been merely sent on gardening leave for six months. During that interregnum, in the spring of 2007, Valcke was hired by his friend Ricardo Teixeira – then head of the Brazilian confederation and a senior FIFA ExCo member – to write up Brazil's 2014 World Cup bid.

Brazil was the only bid on the ExCo table the following October. By that time Valcke was back in FIFA as general secretary. Properly he declared an interest but, in any case, he does not have a vote and, anyway, Brazil was the only bid on the table.

Some time soon afterwards the general secretary became the secretary-general. While that suited Blatter's world stage ambitions, for Valcke it meant more apparent power and an even busier life juggling the narrow confines of World Cup progress-chaser with all the rest of FIFA's concerns in governing the game.

Valcke justifies the World Cup overseer role on the grounds that a project which generates more than 90 per cent of FIFA's income needs the attention only a senior figure can bring. Others feel it's a tough enough job without all the other burdens.

But then one of the most gaping failures of the reform process set under way by Blatter and led by governance adviser Mark Pieth was in not defining the job descriptions and modus operandi of both the president and the secretary-general.

So now the Brazilian media is sinking its teeth deeper into Valcke: his marketing career; his friendship with Teixeira; the fact that he was still being paid off by FIFA while writing the Brazil World Cup bid. And doubtless more mud will be thrown.

Still, Valcke has a broad back and he likes fast cars. He may need both. The first to shoulder the pressure yet to come and the second for a speedy getaway. **WS**

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"I want people to judge my work as if I was a man"

The first female coach of a male pro club, Helena Costa takes her first press conference at French second division side Clermont

REPORTS we couldn't make up

1 Eccentric German cycling fan Didi Senft, otherwise known as "*El Diablo*", can often be seen on the route of the Tour de France and Giro d'Italia races. He is famous for wearing his red devil costume and painting the devil's trident-fork symbol on roads prior to the race stage riding through.

During Euro 2008 he rode a "Football Bike" from his home in Storkow, south east of Berlin, to Austria prior to Germany's game with Croatia.

And to commemorate Germany's appearance at Brazil 2014, Senft – who is in the *Guinness Book of Records* for riding the world's largest bicycle – has created a new bike, complete with 73 footballs and a figure of the famous Rio statue of Christ the Redeemer.

On yer bike...cycling nut Senft's latest creation is in honour of Brazil 2014

Road to Rio...part of the "Orange Trophy Tour" from the USA to Brazil

2 A convoy of 22 orange vehicles left New York's Time Square in March and travelled through 14 countries, arriving in Brazil, 80 days later for the start of the World Cup.

They passed through Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Paraguay.

3 Benfica celebrated their 33rd Portuguese title by playing their final home match of the season, against Vitoria Setubal, with the number 33 stamped on their faces.

Numbers game...Benfica

4 A sports tribunal in Brazil has ordered second division club Santa Cruz to play two home games behind closed doors following the death of a spectator who was hit on the head by a toilet bowl thrown through the crowd.

The incident occurred as trouble broke out after the match between Santa Cruz and Parana at the Arruda Stadium in the city of Recife.

Police said that a total of three toilets were ripped out of the ground's public lavatories and hurled from the top of the stands towards brawling spectators below.

Santa Cruz fan Paulo Ricardo Gomes da Silva was hit on the head by one of the bowls, killing him instantly.

5 Bolivia's football-mad president Evo Morales has signed for Bolivian first division club Sport Boys for next season.

The 54-year-old will not be able to play in every game due to his work schedule, but he is likely to be used – mainly in midfield – for 20 minutes of each match that he plays.

The president will wear the number 10 shirt and get paid for his exploits.

6 Hungary's national coach, Attila Pinter, has been ordered to attend anger management classes after he was caught insulting the referee during a match that involved his own nine-year-old son.

"He must improve his behaviour," a Hungarian federation spokesman said.

OBITUARIES

World Cups...Jardine

SANDY JARDINE (1948-2014)
The former full-back played for Scotland at the 1974 and 1978 World Cups, winning a total of 38 caps. He was twice voted Scotland's player of the year.

MARINHO CHAGAS (1952-2014)
The blond-haired right-back in Brazil's 1974 World Cup side, he also played in the USA for New York Cosmos.

International...Marinho won 28 caps for Brazil

La Liga win...Vilanova

TITO VILANOVA (1968-2014)
Won 14 trophies as assistant to Pep Guardiola at Barcelona, before being appointed coach in 2012 and winning La Liga in his first season. He stepped down in July 2013 due to ill health.

VUJADIN BOSKOV (1931-2014)
The former Yugoslavia coach took Real Madrid to the 1981 European Cup Final, where they lost 1-0 to Liverpool, having won La Liga and the Spanish Cup the season before. He also led Den Haag to the Dutch Cup in 1975 and won the 1990 European Cup-winners Cup and Serie A with Sampdoria.

Real success...Boskov

Paul GARDNER

THE WORLDWIDE VIEW

The looming scandal of Brazil 2014 – will FIFA allow cheating to win the World Cup?

Advantage...Sevilla keeper Beto is way off his line as he denies Oscar Cardozo of Benfica in the shoot-out in this year's Europa League Final

To quote, more or less, Oscar Wilde: "To win one UEFA title on a shoot-out may be regarded as fortunate; to win two that way looks like cheating."

Cheating it is. When Sevilla beat Espanyol in a shoot-out to win the UEFA Cup in 2007, their goalkeeper, Andres Palop, made three crucial saves. On two of them he clearly cheated by moving forward before the kick was struck. The referee, Switzerland's Massimo Busacca, saw nothing wrong, Palop was treated as a hero and Sevilla took the trophy.

It happened again in this year's Europa League Final. Sevilla goalkeeper Beto cheated blatantly to make two saves against Benfica. Again the referee – Felix Brych, Germany's World Cup referee – saw nothing wrong. Beto was hailed, on the UEFA website, for his "heroics" and Sevilla won the cup.

All four kicks mentioned should have been retaken. How can it be that the officials involved failed to notice such obvious flouting of the rules?

Goalkeepers already get a break in the shoot-out; one step forward is allowed because of the impossibility of judging exactly when the step was made. But that unofficial, but necessary, leniency should be followed by a zero-tolerance approach from the referees.

After all, the shoot-out marks the most important stage of any game in which it is used. After 120 minutes of football, the game is now won or lost on these kicks. Each one is critical. Yet referees conduct the procedure in a manner so utterly slapdash that it allows cheating to flourish.

Chaotic rule book

In defence of referees, their off-hand attitude is simply a reflection of the rule book, which is not far short of chaotic when it deals with the shoot-out.

At a regular penalty kick, the rules say it is the job of the assistant referee (AR) to raise his flag "if the goalkeeper blatantly moves off the goal line..." That's all. No other function is mentioned.

On the next page, the rules deal with what the AR must do during the shoot-out: "His main duty is to check if the ball crosses the line."

> A goalkeeper's forward movement should be punished with a yellow card

As for the referee himself, his responsibility is not defined. The AR is told where he "must" stand, but the referee's position is only indicated (suggested?) by a diagram and makes it more difficult for him to simultaneously watch the keeper and to check the legality of the kicker's run-up. If that's what he's supposed to be doing.

Nowhere is the refinement of goal-line technology mentioned. If it is in use, which it will be during the World Cup in Brazil, it will decide if the ball is over the line, depriving the AR of his "main duty" during the shoot-out.

With the World Cup now centre-stage, it is FIFA's duty to ensure that the tournament does not permit cheating. Past experience suggests that there will be games decided by a shoot-out – which brings the very real possibility of big-time cheating. What is urgently needed is a serious commitment to stamping out goalkeeper movement.

FIFA needs to impress on referees the importance of banishing cheating from the shoot-outs. Before each shoot-out, the referee should make it clear to the coaches and the goalkeepers that forward movement will be penalized. Not only with a re-take of the kick, but with a yellow card to the keeper for unsporting behaviour. If the keeper moves again, he will be red-carded, leaving his team without a regular keeper for the rest of the shoot-out.

As for spotting goalkeeper movement, if the AR will not – or maybe cannot – call it, then the task should be handed over to an official watching TV replays. Those replays are available immediately and there is no "continual action" to interrupt. Play comes to a halt after each shoot-out kick. The ensuing "natural pause" allows plenty of time for a replay review that will decide whether a re-take – and a card – are necessary.

Waiting for the ponderous IFAB to correct the disarray in its rule book is not an option. What I am suggesting needs to be done now to make sure that fair play, much treasured by FIFA we are told, rules at Brazil 2014. **WS**

"The players there will have to learn to suffer"

Former Argentina centre-back Osvaldo Piazza warns Marseille what to expect under new coach Marcelo Bielsa

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

EUROPE

LUIS ENRIQUE left Celta Vigo to replace Gerardo Martino as Barcelona coach on a two-year deal. Celta appointed Argentinian **EDUARDO BERIZZO**, who was previously with O'Higgins of Chile, as Luis Enrique's successor. **JOSE LUIS MENDILIBAR** was appointed coach of Levante, replacing **JOAQUIN CAPARROS** who joined Granada. **SERGIO GONZALEZ** replaced Javier Aguirre as coach of Espanyol. **JAVI GRACIA** was appointed coach of Malaga after Bernd Schuster left the club.

Four titles... Gareca

LOUIS VAN GAAL will join Manchester United as manager on a three-year contract after leading Holland at the World Cup. He will be assisted by **RYAN GIGGS**, who has retired from playing and was in temporary charge of the Premier League side for their last four games of the season following the sacking of David Moyes. Argentinian **MAURICIO POCHETTINO** left Southampton and joined Tottenham Hotspur, who sacked Tim Sherwood.

MARCO VAN BASTEN left Heerenveen at the end of the season and succeeded Dick Advocaat at AZ.

Barca boss...Enrique

ARMIN VEH left Eintracht Frankfurt for Stuttgart, who he led to the Bundesliga title in 2007, with former Werder Bremen boss **THOMAS SCHAAF** replacing him at Frankfurt. **KASPER HJULMAND** quit Danish Superliga side Nordsjaelland to succeed Thomas Tuchel at Mainz, while Bayer Leverkusen replaced Sami Hyypia with **ROGER SCHMIDT**, who took Salzburg to this year's Austrian title. **ADI HUTTER** took over from Schmidt.

Austria Vienna named **GERALD BAUMGARTNER** as their new coach after he took second division Sankt-Polten to this year's Austrian Cup Final.

The arrival of **DAVIDE NICOLA** and **MAURIZIO PELLEGRINO** at Livorno and Catania respectively could not save either Serie A side from relegation. Udinese appointed former Internazionale boss **ANDREA STRAMACCIONI** as their new coach, with Francesco Guidolin taking a job behind the scenes. **IVO PULGA** was appointed coach of Cagliari for a second time.

JULEN LOPETEGUI, who led Spain to the European under-19 title in 2011 and the under-21 crown two years later, signed a three-year deal to coach Portuguese side Porto.

Amkar Perm coach **STANISLAV CHERCHESOV** replaced Dan Petrescu at Dynamo Moscow.

ROBBIE NEILSON replaced Gary Locke as manager of Hearts after they were relegated from the Scottish Premier League, with ex-Scotland boss **CRAIG LEVEIN** taking over as director of football. Former assistant **TOMMY CRAIG** is now in charge at St Mirren after Danny Lennon, who led the club to victory in last year's Scottish League Cup, parted company with the club.

Club class...Spain age-group coach Lopetegui has joined Porto

Sporting Lisbon replaced Leonardo Jardim with **MARCO SILVA**, who led Estoril to fourth in the Portuguese league and a place in next season's Europa League.

SERHIY REBROV succeeded Oleh Blokhin as Dynamo Kiev coach after leading the club to victory in the Ukrainian Cup Final while caretaker. Dnipro replaced Juande Ramos with **MYRON MARKEVYCH**.

Greek Superleague runners-up PAOK named **ANGELOS ANASTASIADIS** as coach for a third time.

LJUBOMIR PETROVIC, who led Red Star Belgrade to the European Cup in 1991, replaced Robert Jarni as coach of Bosnian side Sarajevo.

Israeli champions Maccabi Tel-Aviv replaced Basle-bound Paulo Sousa with **OSCAR GARCIA**, who returns after a season in England with Brighton & Hove Albion.

Former Northern Ireland striker **WARREN FEENEY** was appointed manager of Linfield after long-serving David Jeffrey stepped down following 17 years in charge.

Bielsa arrives at Marseille

In charge...Bielsa

Former Argentina and Athletic Bilbao coach **MARCELO BIELSA** was appointed Marseille coach, succeeding Jose Anigo. **SYLVAIN RIPOLL** replaced Christian Gourcuff at Lorient, Paris Saint-Germain assistant boss **CLAUDE MAKELELE** took over at Bastia and Lyon appointed former player **HUBERT FOURNIER** as their new boss. Former France international **WILLY SAGNOL** was named coach of Bordeaux.

"One FA Cup in nine years? It's really a great moment for them"

Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho sarcastically applauds Arsenal for their recent victory over Hull

Appointments, sackings and loans

Bundesliga switch...Schaaf replaces Veh at Eintracht Frankfurt

SOUTH AMERICA

RICARDO GARECA, who won four titles with Velez Sarsfield in his native Argentina, replaced Gilson Kleina as coach of Brazilian club Palmeiras.

Argentinian **JULIO CESAR FALCIONI** was named coach of Chilean club Universidad Catolica, replacing Uruguayan **MARTIN LASARTE** who joined Universidad de Chile.

CONCACAF

ALBERT ROCA was appointed coach of El Salvador. The 51-year-old Spaniard replaces Agustin Castillo. **IVAN SOPEGNO** took charge of Guatemala.

AFRICA

Former goalkeeper **BADOU ZAKI** was named Morocco coach for a second time, taking over from Hassan Benabicha who held the position in an interim capacity. Zaki was previously in charge of the national side from 2002 to 2005.

Ethiopia, Tanzania and Rwanda have new national coaches, with **MARIANO BARRETO** of Portugal, Dutchman **MART NOOIJ** and England's **STEPHEN CONSTANTINE** respectively.

Brazil-born **PAULO CAMPOS** replaced Nasredin Nabi as coach of Sudan's Al Hilal in the weeks leading up to the start of the Champions League group stage.

CHERIF SOULEYMANE, who was African Footballer of the Year in 1972, was named coach of Guinean champions Horoya after former Senegal national coach Amara Traore paid the price for the club's failure to reach the group phase of the CAF Confederations Cup.

ASIA

Sydney appointed **GRAHAM ARNOLD** to replace Frank Farina, who was sacked as coach after they lost 2-1 to Melbourne Victory in the A-League elimination finals. **PHIL STUBBINS** will take charge of Newcastle Jets next season.

AFC Champions League quarter-finalists Al Hilal of Saudi Arabia appointed Romanian **LAURENTIU REGHECAMPF** as their coach.

OUT

Au revoir...Ranieri

EUROPE

CLAUDIO RANIERI stepped down after two years as coach of Monaco and **HERVE RENARD** left Sochaux following their relegation to Ligue 2.

Norwich City dismissed **CHRIS HUGHTON,** leaving no black managers in the top four divisions of English football. West Bromwich Albion parted company with **PEPE MEL** after just four months.

BOB PEETERS quit as coach of Belgian side Waasland-Beveren.

Nuremberg, who were relegated from the Bundesliga, sacked **GERTJAN VERBEEK** three games before the end of the season.

After three successive Scottish Premiership titles, Celtic manager **NEIL LENNON** left the club.

SOUTH AMERICA

Former Brazil striker **ADRIANO** left Atletico Paranaense after they were eliminated from the Libertadores Cup.

AFRICA

South Africa will not renew the contract of coach **GORDON IGESUND** when it expires at the end of July.

Former Dutch World Cup captain **RUUD KROL** was sacked as coach of Tunisian club Esperance after they lost a second successive African Champions League game.

Short stay...Adriano was on his way after a Libertadores Cup exit

ASIA

After two years in the A-League, former Italy and Juventus striker **ALESSANDRO DEL PIERO** left Sydney.

UAE side Al Jazira sacked former Italy goalkeeper **WALTER ZENGA** after only seven months as coach of the UAE club.

PARK JI-SUNG, who won 100 caps for South Korea and scored at three World Cups, has retired at the age of 33. He won four league titles with Manchester United.

Yakin leaves champions Basle

MURAT YAKIN left Basle at the end of the season, having led the club to the Swiss Super League title in both his campaigns as coach.

Brian GLANVILLE

THE VOICE OF FOOTBALL

Blatter's FIFA, a plague on the game

The sheer shameless self-indulgence, the sublime arrogance of Sepp Blatter could scarcely have been more starkly exposed than the news that he had allocated £19million to a film about FIFA, reportedly insisting that certain potentially embarrassing cuts be made.

Why anyone should want to make a film about FIFA at all, unless it is ruthlessly and comprehensively investigative, defied rational explanation. FIFA was morally doomed from the moment Joao Havelange so deviously ousted Stanley Rous as president in Frankfurt in 1974, with the help of the votes of suborned Africans flown in to support him.

Now, following the belated punishments inflicted on himself and his almost equally appalling protégé and ex-son-in-law Ricardo Teixeira, we await the conclusions of the report on World Cup venue corruption by the American lawyer Michael Garcia.

That there has been dirty work at the crossroads over the deranged choice of Qatar is surely a commonplace and just how Russia, with its racist afflicted football, was chosen is another story surely to be investigated. As for Teixeira, time and again challenged over tax avoidance by the Brazilian revenue authorities and forced to resign as leader of Brazil's World Cup organisation over the ISL scandal, the mere fact he was ever thus appointed tells you all you need to know about the moral cesspit of Brazilian football.

There can be no doubt that, whatever the epidemic corruption of the vast country, surely in terms of pure football – if that is not in itself a contradiction in terms – Brazil, with its glorious World Cup record have long since deserved to become the hosts for the first time since 1950.

> Why anyone should want to make a film about FIFA defies rational explanation

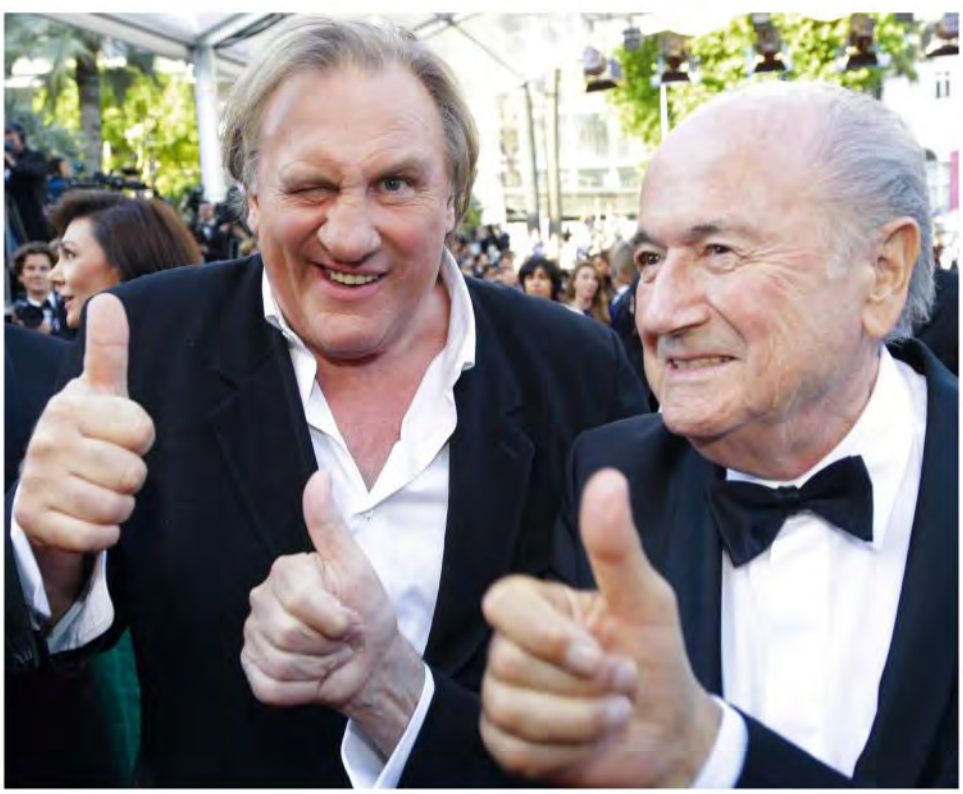
Whether they make a dog's dinner of it is another matter. There was once an old American adage, "South America is the continent of tomorrow, but tomorrow is always a fiesta."

Blatter has blithely and belatedly told us that it was indeed a mistake to allot the World Cup to Qatar. But instead of proceeding to the next logical step and advising that the vote should be re-run, he merely and fatuously continues to insist that the tournament should be played in the European winter, thus sending club football into chaos.

I do believe that football as a whole, at least at its presidential levels, bears much responsibility for Havelange's protracted and deplorable reign. Yet again one remembers the words of the 18th-century English philosopher Edmund Burke which may be paraphrased as, "for evil to triumph it is enough for good men to do nothing".

Of course, Blatter will be voted back into misused power for a fifth term as Afro-Asian and many CONCACAF federations have their snouts in the FIFA trough.

Yes, at least the ineffable Trinidadian Jack Warner has ultimately and belatedly been forced out. But scanning the deeply embarrassing and repugnant correspondence between Blatter and Warner, with Warner apparently extracting every financial concession he wanted thanks to Blatter's need for CONCACAF votes, you realise that nothing short of its abolition could possibly make FIFA anything but a plague on the game. WS



Movie matters...FIFA president Blatter (right) with the French actor Gerard Depardieu at the Cannes Film Festival in May

At last...Wenger lifts Arsenal's first trophy for nine years

Wenger's Final folly

Strange to see Arsene Wenger eulogised for his team's hard fought win against Hull City at Wembley. Putting in Jack Wilshere and Tomas Rosicky a stroke of genius? Come on. Both should have been on at least at half-time. In Italy and probably in Spain, Wenger would surely have been out on his ear after those shocking league defeats at Manchester City, Liverpool and Chelsea.

Even in the Final, luck was with them after Per Mertesacker crashed to the ground with the score at 3-2 and the ball whizzed across an exposed Arsenal goalmouth. But Wenger has his huge new contract and nobody at the club at board or executive level to say him nay.

Football can do without Cameron's meddling

Why do British prime ministers express their irrelevant and ill-informed views about football, whereof they so plainly know nothing?

Asked whether he thought Richard Scudamore, the top banana of the Premier League, should resign over his recent, somewhat misogynist, statements in private emails, David Cameron implied he should.

Let me say that I found Scudamore's remarks crude and gratuitous, but the very way Scudamore's indiscretions were revealed was debatable.

His accuser was a young woman working – temporarily, it seemed – in his office. It has emerged that she had been paid by the newspaper which reported the matter. Fair enough, I suppose, but she surely cannot have it both ways. If she felt she was revealing a moral outrage, shouldn't virtue have been its own reward?

And Tony Blair once said he agreed that Glenn Hoddle should be sacked as England's manager after expressing his somewhat arcane view that handicapped people are suffering the consequences of sins committed in past existence. Wholly though I disagree with it, such belief seems well established in areas of the Far East.

Hoddle was indeed dismissed; but what business was it of Blair?

Pundit...the prime minister had a view

Past returns to haunt Hull

History repeats itself, said Karl Marx, the first time as tragedy, the second as farce. If you were a Hull City supporter at Wembley on the day they lost the FA Cup Final to Arsenal, it might have rung a bell with you; if anyone had ever told you about it.

For English football, unlike Italian in particular, doesn't "do" history, so I don't think anyone much but me zoomed in on the previous time that Hull faced the Gunners in the latter stages of the Cup. Hull went a couple of goals ahead and were knocked out just the same.

It was in 1930 – no, I missed it, too, not being born – and the semi-final game took place at Leeds' Elland Road between an Arsenal team under the great Herbert Chapman which still hadn't won any major honour, and Hull, hell bent on relegation to the old Third Division (North).

Their manager was none other than that wonderful canny character Bill McCracken, usually held responsible with his Newcastle United fellow full-back Frank Hudspeth, of changing the offside law in the mid-1920s through their ruthless offside trap.

Ironically – you can quote Karl Marx again if you like – Arsenal went behind through an error by their Welsh goalkeeper Danny Lewis. After a weakish clearance he stood confidently waiting for the ball kicked by Jimmy Howieson to sail over the cross bar. It didn't. It sailed into the net. Then Eddie Hapgood, of all peerless left-backs, put through his own goal, 2-0. David Jack got a goal back but with Hull a man down, limping on the wing, time had almost run out. Then Cliff "Boy" Bastin, aged 18, cut in for a marvellous solo goal. 2-2.

> English football, unlike Italian in particular, doesn't "do" history

The Gunners won a bruising replay at Villa Park when in Hapgood's euphemistic words, "Some of the Hull players tried to play without the ball," one being sent off, and went on to beat Chapman's previous club Huddersfield Town, in the Final.

● Brian Glanville's *The Story of the World Cup* is out now (Faber & Faber, £14.99)

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HOW TO JOIN THE BIG BEASTS OF EUROPE'S COACHING ELITE

If you are a member of an exclusive coaching clique or a famous ex-player then you might just land a job at one of Europe's top clubs. Glenn Moore explains why

"Round up the usual "suspects." Captain Renault's order in the film *Casablanca* could be repeated on every sports desk when the coach of a big club is fired and a list of prospective replacements required.

The big beasts of European coaching are always the ones in the frame when a major job becomes available.

Unless local factors point to a particular appointment – Luis Enrique at Barcelona, Antonio Conte at Juventus or Clarence Seedorf at Milan – men such as Carlo Ancelotti, Jose Mourinho, Louis Van Gaal, Pep Guardiola, Rafael Benitez and Jurgen Klopp can expect to be name-checked whenever a marquee post comes up. Manuel Pellegrini can be added to that roster having finally won a title in Europe, along with this season's rising star, Diego Simeone.

However, Arsene Wenger – previously mentioned whenever Real Madrid, Bayern Munich or Paris Saint-Germain fire a coach – can be taken off the list having signed a new contract at Arsenal.

This reliance on seasoned campaigners or old club favourites is understandable. When a coach leaves a club at this level it is either because the team are doing badly or he has fallen out with the owner. In either case, the owner will receive criticism from the fans, and the easiest way to placate them is by appointing a big name or local hero. So when the Glazers needed a safe appointment at Manchester United, to calm shareholder nerves and the fans' ire, Van Gaal was the answer. When Alan Sugar sacked Terry Venables at Tottenham Hotspur, prompting fan rebellion, he hired Ossie Ardiles, one of Spurs' most loved and successful players. The protests died down.

But Ardiles did not prosper and Sugar was soon looking for another manager. The same looks like happening with Seedorf. This is hardly a surprise, especially in the latter case. Seedorf, despite having no previous management experience, was expected to instantaneously turn around a huge but failing club against a backdrop of political in-fighting. He cannot be blamed for taking

the job, but offering it to him went against the way the people who own these clubs usually run their other businesses.

When it comes to winning matches, the coach (or manager in Britain) is the most important employee. But Nicola Cortese said of his approach when chairman at Southampton: "We came up with plans that were not traditional in England. The manager has an important role, but basically he is just a department head like any other."

Tell that to Manchester United whose appointment and sacking of David Moyes, combined with their failure to qualify for the Champions League, cost the club around £50million. Not many department heads can influence the balance sheet that catastrophically in 10 months.

Given that, one would expect owners to follow the same procedures as practised by businesses in the real world when seeking a key employee. Many use headhunters to identify candidates, almost all would put them through a series of interviews, and some would use psychometric testing as well.

> "The manager has an important role, but basically he's just a department head"
> Former Southampton chairman Nicola Cortese

Yet coaches are often chosen on a whim, because they are flavour of the month, a fans' favourite, even someone the owner has got to know on the golf course, or around the roulette tables. In Moyes' case the Glazers simply trusted the judgement of the outgoing manager, Alex Ferguson, who seems to have simply chosen a "mini-me". As for the interview process, at a football club one face-to-face meeting usually suffices, if that.

Fear of being too late

One reason for this is that appointments are usually made in haste, especially at clubs threatened by relegation, or who fear missing out on a lucrative Champions League place. By the time a long round of interviews have been completed it could be too late. But long-term it is often a case of act in haste, repent at leisure.

Given the turnover of managers, a club should be permanently reviewing its succession planning. Adam Crozier, when chief executive of the Football Association, once disarmed the media by revealing he was always thinking of the incumbent England's manager's successor adding it was the "what if" scenario, as in "what if he fell under a bus?" The fact England subsequently had to employ a caretaker after the exit of Fabio Capello suggested not all Crozier's successors have thought so far ahead.

It is the same at club level. Clubs too often go for whoever is hot – which a year ago was Klopp and is now Simeone.

This can work out. When Roman Abramovich was seeking his first Chelsea manager, having decided to move on the inherited Claudio Ranieri, he initially looked at the usual suspects of the time: Fabio Capello, Marcello Lippi, Sven Goran Eriksson and Guus Hiddink.

Then his eye was caught by a pair of young guns who had taken unfancied clubs to the Champions League Final: Jose Mourinho and Didier Deschamps. Mourinho's Porto won the match and he got the job. But the next time the Russian billionaire hired a hip young Portuguese, Andre Villas-Boas, the union proved to be less fruitful.

Argentinians are in vogue at present, with what might be called "the Marcelo Bielsa effect" after the new Marseille coach who has influenced countrymen such as Simeone, Chile boss Jorge Sampaoli, new Tottenham coach Mauricio Pochettino, former Barca boss Gerardo Martino and Spaniard Guardiola.

Pochettino's appointment is a fairly obvious example of a chairman following fashion rather than having a philosophy. Daniel Levy has clearly not been put off by the failures at White Hart Lane of Jacques Santini and Juande Ramos, who were themselves "hot" before going to Spurs, or by Martino's short-lived spell at Barcelona. Should Alex Sabella lead Argentina to triumph this summer the obsession with Bielsa and Argentinians will only increase. Then again, a Holland success may make the likes of Frank De Boer even more coveted with the Dutch way regaining prominence.

When appointments have gone wrong clubs often choose an opposite just as England, in one veteran sage's words, once swung "from bookies to bishops and back again". Internazionale cannot appear to work out whether they want a veteran (Claudio Ranieri, incumbent Walter Mazzari), a novice (Leonardo, Andrea Stramaccioni), or an itinerant big name (Mourinho, Benitez).

Double fail...Moyes struggled to win points and to entertain fans during his lone season at Old Trafford

Not enough...Mourinho won La Liga at Real but few friends for his pragmatic style of football

Sense of identity

Many clubs do not appear to have a sense of their own identity and make endlessly contradictory appointments. Even those that do can struggle with the realities. Real Madrid put great store by playing attractive football, but twice in the last decade they have responded to periods of famine by bringing in proven winners in Capello and Mourinho, only to swiftly tire of the unspectacular football once La Liga had been reclaimed.

This was one of Moyes' problems at United. It was not just that results were poor; the performances were dull. After a quarter-century of Ferguson sending out teams with instructions to attack come what may, few fans were impressed with such observations in defeat as, "we passed the ball well". Big clubs need to win, but the biggest need to do so in style.

The financial pressures of the modern game have made management a precarious profession. Moyes, Martino and Stramaccioni will all feel with more time, and in different circumstances, they could have been successful in their first post at a major club.

All three appointments were something of a gamble. Moyes had never managed in the Champions League group stage, or even won a trophy; Martino's European experience was limited to a season playing for Tenerife in 1991; and Stramaccioni had not previously coached a senior team before he was given the Internazionale job. Their failures will only increase the preference of owners to go for the tried-and-tested.

Perhaps the best way to gatecrash the

EUROPEAN MANAGERS INDEX

Introducing a new feature, World Soccer's ranking of football's most in-demand coaches

1 Diego Simeone

Age: 44
Nationality: Argentinian
Current status: Hugely successful with Atletico Madrid, winning the Spanish Liga and reaching the 2014 Champions League Final
Past: Won league titles with Estudiantes and River Plate in Argentina, but less successful with San Lorenzo
Style: Brilliant motivator and organiser
Future: In contention for "super club" job

2 Jurgen Klopp

Age: 46
Nationality: German
Current status: Supremo at Borussia Dortmund
Past: Guided Mainz into Bundesliga for the first time before leaving for Dortmund, who he steered to successive Bundesliga titles in 2011 and 2012, and the 2013 Champions League Final
Style: Charismatic, bespectacled motivator
Future: Contracted until 2018 and with huge emotional ties to Dortmund, but could be tempted by a really top job

3 Frank De Boer

Age: 44
Nationality: Dutch
Current status: Led Ajax to their fourth successful Eredivisie title, a record for a coach
Past: Ajax youth coach, Holland assistant coach at the 2010 World Cup
Style: Committed to youth and the Ajax/Barcelona system of possession-based attack
Future: Has been linked with Tottenham but may set his sights higher

4 Roberto Martinez

Age: 40
Nationality: Spanish
Current status: Successful first season at Everton, where he introduced a more attacking style
Past: Took Swansea into the English second tier, then guided Wigan to FA Cup success
Style: Progressive and media friendly, but unproven when it comes to spending big money
Future: Career is on an upward trajectory, so next stop could be a Champions League club

5 Luciano Spalletti

Age: 55
Nationality: Italian
Current status: Unemployed after leaving Zenit in March
Past: Took Udinese and Roma into the Champions League. Won two Russian league titles with Zenit
Style: Ambitious, attacking tactics – his Roma played 4-6-0
Future: A club needing a fresh tactical impetus

6 Thomas Tuchel

Age: 40
Nationality: German
Current status: Unemployed and waiting for offers after leaving Mainz at the end of the season
Past: Promoted from youth coach to head coach of Mainz for five seasons, during which time the club consistently punched above their weight
Style: Resourceful, clever tactician, strong motivator
Future: Won't be out of work for long; he quit Mainz after they refused to release him from his contract

7 Gerardo Martino

Age: 51
Nationality: Argentinian
Current status: Unemployed after a relatively unsuccessful season at Barcelona
Past: Coached Paraguay at the 2010 World Cup, took Newell's Old Boys to the Libertadores Cup semi-finals
Style: High-pressing passing game
Future: A top job back in Argentina, possibly the national side if Alex Sabella moves on after the World Cup

8 David Moyes

Age: 51
Nationality: Scottish
Current status: Unemployed after being sacked by Manchester United in April
Past: Built Preston North End and Everton sides that made steady progress on modest resources
Style: Sides that are hard to beat and put function before flair
Future: Keen to rebuild his reputation, possibly outside the UK

9 Ralf Rangnick

Age: 55
Nationality: German
Current status: Sporting director at Salzburg and sister club Leipzig
Past: Worked wonders at Hoffenheim and took Schalke to the Champions League semi-finals in 2011
Style: Once dubbed the "German Wenger", he studied at the University of Sussex. Favours attacking, high-pressing tactics
Future: A return to frontline coaching

10 Vitor Pereira

Age: 45
Nationality: Portuguese
Current status: Unemployed after a spell earning petro-dollars in Saudi Arabia with Al Ahli
Past: Succeeded Andre Villas-Boas at Porto and won back-to-back Portuguese league titles in 2012 and 2013
Style: Thoughtful, attack-minded, good with young players
Future: A return to a European league

Key EXPERIENCED · SUCCESSFUL · VOLATILE · FORMER PLAYER · YOUNG · LONG-TERM STRATEGIST · TACTICIAN · AVAILABLE

11 **Massimo Allegri** unattached
12 **Murat Yakin** unattached
13 **Ernesto Valverde** Athletic Bilbao
14 **Dan Petrescu** unattached
15 **Quique Flores** unattached
16 **Claudio Ranieri** unattached
17 **Roberto Donadoni** Parma
18 **Roberto Mancini** Galatasaray
19 **Vincenzo Montella** Fiorentina
20 **Slaven Bilic** Besiktas
21 **Paul Clement** Real Madrid (assistant coach)

22 **Martin Jol** unattached
23 **Bert Van Marwijk** unattached
24 **Elie Baup** unattached
25 **Bernd Schuster** unattached
26 **Huub Stevens** unattached
27 **Pepe Mel** unattached
28 **Miroslav Djukic** unattached
29 **Vladimir Petkovic** unattached
30 **Mario Been** unattached
31 **Jesualdo Ferreira** unattached
32 **Jorge Jesus,** Benfica
33 **Lluis Carreras** Mallorca
34 **Markus Wienzierl** Augsburg
35 **Christophe Galtier** Saint-Etienne
36 **Philippe Montanier** Rennes
37 **Malky Mackay** unattached
38 **Antoine Kombouare** Lens

39 **Sinisa Mihajlovic** Sampdoria
40 **Giuseppe Iachini** Palermo
41 **Chris Hughton** unattached
42 **Erwin Van de Looi** Groningen
43 **Guy Luzon** Standard Liege
44 **Michel** Olympiakos
45 **Ramon Diaz** River Plate
46 **Luis Zubeldia** LDU Quito
47 **Rene Meulensteen** unattached
48 **Neil Lennon** unattached
49 **Michael Laudrup** unattached
50 **Sami Hyypia** unattached

More information on the Index at **worldsoccer.com**

Makalele...blazing the trail for black coaches

top table will increasingly be to join a once pre-eminent club that has slipped from grace, then lead it back to centre stage. That has worked for Brendan Rodgers. Were Liverpool Champions League regulars in the summer of 2012 it is unlikely their choice of new manager would have come down to the bosses of Swansea City and Wigan Athletic, nor that the latter, Roberto Martinez, would have distanced himself from the post. Liverpool, who had previously been rebuffed by Klopp, ended up with Rodgers, and are now very glad they did.

Job-hunting is not, however, straightforward for the big beasts either. It is relatively unusual for one of them to take a step down, as Van Gaal did with Spalletti, who had won two Russian titles and one cup, is unclear. So far the jury is out as AVB inherited a team second in the league, which is where they finished.

Significant appointment

Maybe the most significant appointment of the summer so far is not that of Van Gaal, but Claude Makelele at Bastia. At the time this made him only the second black coach in a major European league and, unlike Seedorf, he had no previous connection with the club that hired him.

His recruitment was thus out of the ordinary. The safety-first culture of big club appointments limits the chances of coaches who are different – and in football that definitely includes ethnic minority coaches.

The sacking of Chris Hughton by Norwich City meant there was not a single manager in the English game's 92-club professional structure who was from an ethnic minority. In the context of a playing staff that is 30 per cent black that is a shocking statistic, but it is not unique.

Seedorf was only the third ethnic minority coach in Serie A after Jarbas Faustinho, a Brazilian who was joint-coach of Napoli with Vujadin Boskov two decades ago, and Italo-Somalo Fabio Liverani who had seven games in charge of Genoa last year.

In the Bundesliga Otto Addo was briefly joint-coach at Hamburg, but only, it seemed, because he had the required UEFA pro licence while co-coach Rudolf Cardoso did not. In Spain Frank Rijkaard had several years at Barcelona, and Francisco Maturana a season at Atletico Madrid, but black coaches remain rare.

Perhaps in these leagues the scarcity of ethnic minority coaches is unsurprising, there have not been many native black players. Although France has many black national players Makelele has few precursors, notably Jean Tigana (Monaco, Lyon) and Antoine Kombouare (PSG).

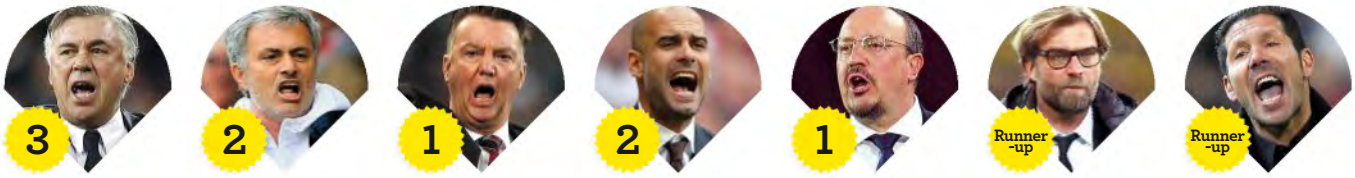
Certainly when it comes to the elite posts Rijkaard and Seedorf are exceptions (Chelsea and PSG were still breaking into the European elite when Gullit and Kombouare were hired, and Atletico were in the doldrums during Maturana's time). All of which suggests it will be a very long time before a major club goes even further and follows Ligue 2's Clermont in appointing someone who has traditionally been the ultimate football outsider, a woman – in this case Helena Costa.

As in Casablanca, the "usual suspects" are always male. **WS**

> "We all have a responsibility in the game to change this"
>
> Chris Hughton on the lack of black managers

EUROPE'S ELITE

Diego Simeone has forced his way into an exclusive European club, where Champions League success is a key requirement on your CV



Carlo **Ancelotti** | Jose **Mourinho** | Louis **Van Gaal** | Pep **Guardiola** | Rafael **Benitez** | Jurgen **Klopp** | Diego **Simeone**

● = Chapmpions League wins

AZ. And that was perhaps prompted by a two-year hiatus since his previous coaching job, at Barcelona. Generally, if they want to maintain their status, the top dogs have to work only on the grand stage. Or cash in on their name and take a lucrative sojourn in some far-flung destination, as Luis Felipe Scolari did in Uzbekistan with Bunyodkor after being axed by Chelsea.

Once a coach has been granted entry into the gilded circle, he will need to fail several times before losing that status. Villas-Boas was sacked by both Chelsea and Tottenham within the space of 22 months, but still picked up another big job, albeit a second tier one, at Zenit. Quite why they thought a man with no experience of Russian football, and no success outside Portugal, would be an upgrade on his predecessor, Luciano

Still wanted...Villas-Boas landed the Zenit job despite being sacked twice in less than two years

Dispatches

Exclusive reports from our worldwide network of correspondents

P30

SPAIN
Atletico Madrid may have been beaten in Europe, but they rule the roost at home.

P32

ARGENTINA
Three years after relegation, River Plate are domestic champions once again.

P33

BRAZIL
There are no Brazilian teams in the Libertadores quarter-finals.

P34

ITALY
Violence at the Cup Final overshadows Juve's title-winning campaign.

P36

HOLLAND
Frank De Boer makes it four championships on the trot as Ajax coach.

P37

PORTUGAL
Does Benfica's domestic treble herald the dawn of a new era?

P38

ENGLAND
Manchester City pounce as Liverpool slip up at the last moment.

P40

RUSSIA
Reigning champions CSKA triumph in a dramatic last day finale.

P41

AUSTRALIA
Three in four for Roar as A-League goes to Brisbane once again.

P42

GERMANY
Pep's plan B proves to his critics that he's not just a one-trick pony.

P44

BELGIUM
End of season play-offs make Anderlecht success look easier than it was.

P45

VATICAN CITY
Monaco provide the opposition for the third time in three years.

P46

FRANCE
Money matters as Paris Saint-Germain and Monaco dominate Ligue 1.

SID LOWE
in Madrid

Simeone's side triumph in La Liga

Atletico are beaten in Europe, but victorious at home

Real Madrid may have won the elusive "*decima*" and been crowned European champions for a 10th time, but they had to play second fiddle domestically to the team they finally overcame in the Champions League Final.

For the first time in a decade neither Real nor Barcelona were champions of Spain. Exactly a year after Atletico Madrid went to the Santiago Bernabeu and took the Spanish Cup from Real Madrid, they went to the Camp Nou and took La Liga from Barca.

When the final whistle went on the 2013-14 season, even the defeated Catalans recognised that they had witnessed something extraordinary and so they stood to applaud. Some even chanted Atletico's name. So, too, did the Atletico fans high in the stands. Only 477 had officially been given tickets for the Camp Nou decider, up against almost 97,000 *culés* – even though hundreds, maybe thousands, more were spread around the ground.

Down below them, Atletico's players collapsed to the turf, unable to believe what they had just done. Only one player in the team had ever won the Spanish title before: former Barca striker David Villa. In the Barcelona team, albeit as a substitute, was Xavi, the man who has won more titles than anyone else in Spanish football history.

This was a league that even their own coach had insisted was "impossible" for them to win. There was no trophy handed out because the president of the Spanish Football Federation was unable to make it, but they knew what they had done. "It doesn't matter; they can't take it off us," Atletico coach Diego Simeone smiled.

All season long, Simeone talked about going game by game, so that's just what they did right up to the final game. On the face of it, Barca versus Atletico on the last day of the season might even have been the biggest single match in La Liga history. For only the third time ever, the two sole contenders faced each other on the final day, knowing that the winner takes the league title.

It had happened in 1946 and again in 1951. In 1946 Sevilla had gone to Barcelona and in 1951 Atletico had gone to Sevilla. Both times, it had ended in a 1-1 draw and both times the away team had taken the title. The same happened at the Camp Nou. Diego Godin's header secured a 1-1 draw for Atletico that was sufficient to see them finish three points clear. It was the club's first league title in 18 years.

Conspiring fates

Atletico were champions, but it had all seemed so unlikely, with fate appearing to conspire against them. On the penultimate week of the season, a stunning 94th-minute save from Malaga goalkeeper Willy Caballero had prevented them from clinching the title, leaving the shell-shocked players trooping off the pitch in silence. It was true that they needed just one point from the final game, but it was a huge task. The title had been so, so close. Suddenly, it felt a long way away.

Instead of playing a Barcelona team that was out of it, a series of shock results in which the top three did not manage a win between them in seven matches, collecting just five points from a possible 21, meant that Real Madrid were out of it and Barcelona somehow had their fate in their own hands.

A fortnight before, they had given up on the title following a 2-2 draw with Getafe. "We need a miracle," Andres Iniesta had said, "and I don't believe in miracles." But the miracle happened – and now Barcelona knew that a win would unexpectedly make them champions. Even coach Gerardo Martino admitted that if his team won the league it would be their first "normal" title; the others, won under other coaches, had been "extraterrestrial".

Worse followed for Atletico as the game kicked off. Top scorer Diego Costa was forced off with injury. He sat on the bench in tears, head in hands, a training top over his face. Then Atletico's most creative player, Arda Turan, also had to make way. He, too, was devastated, beating the turf in frustration. Simeone tried to comfort him but the coach looked lost, shaking his head sadly at the injustice of it all. Two players had gone already, and two brilliant players at that.

Then, out of nowhere, Barcelona had the lead. Alexis Sanchez smashed in an incredible shot on the rise from a difficult angle which flew like a rocket past Thibaut Courtois. All that effort, fighting against the odds, and it looked like the title would be denied to Atletico. But this is a team with courage.

At half-time at the Camp Nou, Simeone told the players that he thought they had been the better side. They need only continue as they had been playing; Barcelona could be attacked. Three chances fell in the first three minutes of the second half. The third was the corner that dropped for central defender Godin to head down and into the net. "I had dreamed of a moment like this, but I can't remember when," said the Uruguayan.

There was still almost an entire half

Victors...Atletico captain Gabi celebrates the title win with fans in Madrid's Neptune Square

COACH OF THE SEASON
DIEGO SIMEONE (Atletico Madrid, *above*) Achieved the remarkable feat of wrestling the league title from the giants of Real and Barca.

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
GABI (Atletico Madrid) With his impeccable performances throughout the campaign, the club's captain symbolised Atletico perfectly.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
AYMERIC LAPORTE (Athletic Bilbao) The teenage centre-back enjoyed a fine season and helped his side into the Champions League qualifiers.

It had seemed so unlikely; fate had appeared to conspire against Atletico

to go and the country suffered a collective coronary. "I thought of [the late] Luis Aragones. I am sure from up there he was in the area defending with us," said Simeone.

Lionel Messi had the ball in the net, a winning "goal" that would have meant Barcelona winning the league, but it was disallowed for offside. Replays suggested that the decision may have been a mistake as the ball probably came to him off an Atletico player. Curiously, there were few real complaints, though, either at the time or afterwards.

Justice was done

Perhaps people felt justice had been done. Atletico had taken on the giants and beaten them with a budget a fifth the size of Madrid and Barcelona. Their starting XI had cost only a fraction over €40million but they had won the league and reached the Champions League Final. Their first league in 18 years, their first European Cup Final in 40.

"I felt like the bigger the challenge the better," Simeone said afterwards. "This has been a wonderful season. We won in Bilbao, we won in Seville, we drew here, we won at the Bernabeu.

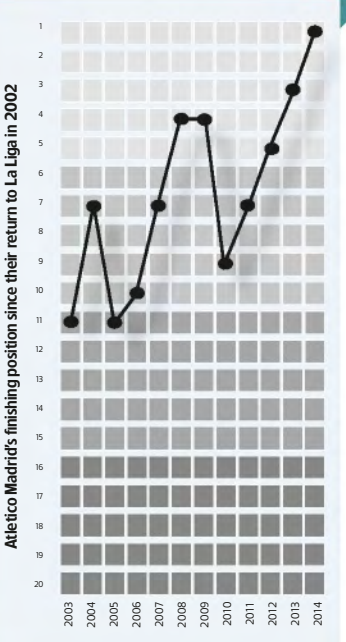
"When opponents congratulate you and say you deserve it, then it makes it even more special. The applause from the Camp Nou was one of the loveliest things I have experienced in football.

"I am sure that with every passing day there are more Atletico fans around the world. The players have achieved something amazing, pure history."

He continued: "This title means something for everyone; it means that you can win in different ways. It's always the players' characteristics that define how you play and we have won in a different way to Madrid or Barcelona."

At the celebrations that packed the city the following night, Simeone suggested there was a broader moral to this story. "This is not just a league," he said. "What this triumph transmits is much more important than that: it shows if you believe and if you work hard, you can do it." WS

ATLETICO'S RISE BACK TO THE TOP



JOEL RICHARDS
in Buenos Aires

River back on top once more

Three years after relegation, "*Los Millonarios*" are champions again

Cathartic...River's last-day 5-0 win against Quilmes clinched the title and saw an outpouring of emotion

Although the fans partied like it was 1996 all over again, this wasn't to celebrate a Libertadores Cup triumph or the three back-to-back league titles they managed the following year. Yet for River Plate supporters, victory in this year's Torneo Final ranks right up there with the club's most famous wins.

Since Diego Simeone led a side featuring Radamel Falcao, Ariel Ortega, Alexis Sanchez and Diego Buonanotte to the clausura title in 2008, River had imploded. They were relegated in 2011 and, for a club with the most domestic league titles, that was unthinkable.

Even an immediate return to the top flight failed to calm the waters, with more instability on the pitch and in the boardroom. So the tears when River secured the title on the final day of the campaign were cathartic. It had taken time, but Ramon Diaz – the coach who had won those titles in the 1990s – had worked his magic again.

Five points clear, River were the best side, but the Argentinian league is fickle. In the capricious short-season format, just six months ago they ended in 17th place. And four matches into this season, River had only won once.

Yet with a returning Fernando Cavenaghi feeding on scraps in front of goal, a lucid Teo Gutierrez, a formidable Carlos Carbonero and the excellent Eder Balanta in the centre of defence, River went on to win eight of the last 11 games, including victory over Boca Juniors at the Bombonera.

Three teams in it

Although it now reads as a comfortable title win, on the final day Estudiantes and Gimnasia were also in with a chance.

Estudiantes lost to Tigre, meaning that there would be no perfect send off for Juan Sebastian Veron, the club icon who has now ended his playing days.

Gimnasia have been league runners-up five times in the professional era but only have an amateur title from 1929 to show for their efforts, and they failed to win any of their last three games.

Beating Gimnasia on the last day were Boca, whose sprint finish came too late to catch their arch-rival. Their season, much as the past years have been, was dominated by doubts over the future of Juan Roman Riquelme, who told national TV that after a bet with his brother he plans to play until he is 40 – without confirming where.

Desperately seeking their first Libertadores success, San Lorenzo are through to the semi-finals. However, a break for the World Cup is likely to be a big problem as the club look set to sell a number of key players.

Velez Sarsfield fell before the quarter-final stage of the Libertadores and despite boasting the domestic season's top scorer in Mauro Zarate, with 13 goals, they were inconsistent in the league. Both Arsenal and Lanus showed more stamina in continental competition, but they went out at the quarter-finals stage. Newell's Old Boys failed to get out of the group stage, despite welcoming back Ever Banega on a short loan.

> "Make no mistake, this has only just begun"
> River Plate president Rodolfo D'Onofrio

Argentinos Juniors and All Boys were relegated, with only bottom club Racing's three-year averages keeping them out of trouble for now. Winning goals in time added-on on the final day for both Colon and Atletico Rafaela forced a relegation play-off between the two.

Despite ending the season seventh, Colon have endured institutional chaos in recent months. A six-point deduction from over non-payment of a transfer fee, plus three points deducted after players went on strike, countered an excellent season. Nineteen years in the top flight ended against Rafaela.

The year ended with the Super Final, in which River beat San Lorenzo 1-0 to qualify for the Sudamericana Cup as well as the Libertadores. WS

COACH OF THE SEASON
RAMON DIAZ
(River Plate)
Brought about a big improvement in player performances and his attacking, possession-based game reaped dividends.

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
CARLOS CARBONERO
(River Plate)
The Colombian midfielder was the title winner's most impressive and consistent performer throughout the season, patrolling the right wing, contributing assists and adding six goals to the title run.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
EZEQUIEL PONCE
(Newell's Old Boys, *right, in white*)
Still yet to become a first-team regular, but at just 16 he grabbed the headlines – and with four goals this season proved there are reasons for the high expectations.

TIM VICKERY
in Rio de Janeiro

New name on the Libertadores

No Brazilian team in the last four for first time since 1991

The Libertadores Cup resumes after the World Cup at the semi-final stage with the certainty that there will be a new name on the trophy. Indeed, none of the last four has reached the Final before – an astonishing statistic for a tournament staged annually since 1960.

Nacional of Paraguay had never previously made it out of the group phase before and their last-four opponents Defensor of Uruguay will be playing in their first semi-final.

While Bolivar are the first Bolivian club to make it through to the last four, the only team left standing with any real tradition in the competition is San Lorenzo of Argentina, who were semi-finalists in the inaugural year of the competition. They are also the only major Buenos Aires club not to have won the competition – and they may never get a better chance than this year.

The biggest surprise this term was the failure of Brazil's teams, who do not feature in the semi-finals for the first time since 1991. The trophy has gone to Brazil in each of the last four years – understandably, since the difference in revenues between Brazilian clubs and the rest of the continent has grown into a chasm in recent years. But even over the last few years, Brazil's domination has only been relative.

Last year, for example, Brazil only had a semi-finalist because Atletico Mineiro goalkeeper Victor saved a stoppage-time penalty in the previous round. Atletico went on to win the title, but they needed penalties in both the semis and the Final – the latter against opponents, Olimpia of Paraguay, whose entire wage bill would not have covered Ronaldinho's earnings.

This year, Brazil's Libertadores representatives looked more vulnerable. Three fell at the group stage, with Atletico Mineiro having their reign ended by Atletico Nacional of Colombia, and Gremio and Cruzeiro both falling to San Lorenzo. Of the six Brazilian starters, only Gremio had cause to curse their luck as they were unfortunate to lose a penalty shoot-out.

Bolivar progress

Perhaps a symbol of this year's Libertadores was the performance of Bolivar in a 2-2 draw away to Rio giants Flamengo in the Maracana. The visitors may have been outgunned in technical and physical terms, but they were more compact and neat in possession and thoroughly deserved their draw.

Rather than the altitude of La Paz, strong away form has been the pillar of Bolivar's progress, for which much credit must go to veteran Spanish coach Xabier Azkargorta. Also eye-catching has been the work of a coach at the other end of the experience scale. Former Paraguay midfielder Gustavo Morinigo, just 37, has crafted a Nacional side that is adept at switching tactics mid-match. He has a dynamic midfield, full of rapid transitions, and can also bring on a third centre-back to tighten up the game. His team have come through two intense encounters against Argentinian opposition, first eliminating Velez Sarsfield and then getting past Arsenal.

Under Fernando Curutchet, Defensor have an interesting collection of young players, especially playmaker Georgian De Arrascaeta and the rapid Brazilian Felipe Gedoz, plus 36-year-old Nicolas Olivera coming off the bench. In the first leg of their quarter-final in Medellin, Defensor were under the cosh against Atletico Nacional, who rattled the woodwork twice. On came Olivera to set up one goal and score the other, and the Uruguayans were well on their way. In the return game, Olivera once more came on to score the only goal.

> "We had two lapses in concentration and that cost us qualification"
> Atletico Mineiro keeper Victor

But in terms of the Libertadores, the man with real experience is San Lorenzo coach Edgardo Bauza, who took LDU Quito of Ecuador to the title in 2008.

Providing San Lorenzo can hang on to players such as Juan Mercier and Ignacio Piatti they will be favourites to win the title. However, the seemingly inevitable exodus has started already, with striker Angel Correa agreeing a deal to join Atletico Madrid. **WS**

Challenge...Carlos Valdes (white shirt) of San Lorenzo battles with Cruzeiro's Willian in the quarter-final stage of this year's Libertadores Cup

PADDY AGNEW
in Rome

Violence scars Cup Final

Shootings overshadow Juve's record-breaking league campaign

Thanks to another "night of shame" at the Italian Cup Final, the Serie A season finished amid scenes of shambolic disgrace as three supporters were shot before the Napoli-Fiorentina game at Rome's Stadio Olimpico.

Given that both sets of supporters have been known to cause trouble in the past, the police worked hard to keep them apart. What they hadn't anticipated, however, was that a "third party" – in the shape of a well-known Roma ultra, 48-year-old Daniele De Santis – would intervene.

De Santis runs a market stall close to where the Napoli fan buses were parked, at Tor di Quinto. Aided by two or three (unidentified) accomplices, he apparently attacked a group of Napoli followers in the hours leading up to kick-off, reportedly aiming fireworks at them in deference to the long-standing bad relations between the two sets of supporters.

Hopelessly outnumbered by bus loads of Napoli followers, De Santis was forced to beat a hasty retreat. But, as he did so, he slipped and fell.

At this point, he pulled out a gun and fired six shots, injuring three people – one of them seriously. When other Napoli fans heard the news that 30-year-old Ciro Esposito had been shot in the chest at close range – he may risk paralysis since a bullet lodged in his spinal chord – they went looking for De Santis.

When they found the Roma ultra he was badly beaten and suffered a cracked skull and a broken leg. By the time fans arrived at the stadium, news of the shooting had gone viral, prompting a surreal atmosphere in which the Napoli fans indicated that they would stage a pitch invasion if the match was played.

In the end, Napoli captain Marek Hamsik had to accompany club officials and the police onto the pitch to talk to his side's supporters. The Slovak midfielder met Napoli ultra Gennaro De Tommaso to confirm that Esposito was not dead as had been rumoured and that the aggression had not been carried out by Fiorentina fans.

De Tommaso, who is the son of an alleged camorrista with links to the Misso crime family in Naples, was himself wearing a T-shirt that read "Free Speziale" in reference to Antonio Speziale, a Catania fan who was sentenced to eight years in prison for killing police inspector Filippo Raciti during violent exchanges between police and fans prior to the February 2007 Sicilian derby between Catania and Palermo.

With the prime minister Matteo Renzi – who is a Fiorentina fan – watching from the VIP seats, it was hugely embarrassing that the authorities had to seek the permission of the Napoli ultras before the game could start; although not before they had jeered the national anthem and thrown all manner of objects at police. For the record, Napoli won the ensuing match 3-1.

> "We're getting better all the time and before long we will be winning again in European competition – and that's guaranteed" Juventus defender Giorgio Chiellini

Powder-keg atmosphere

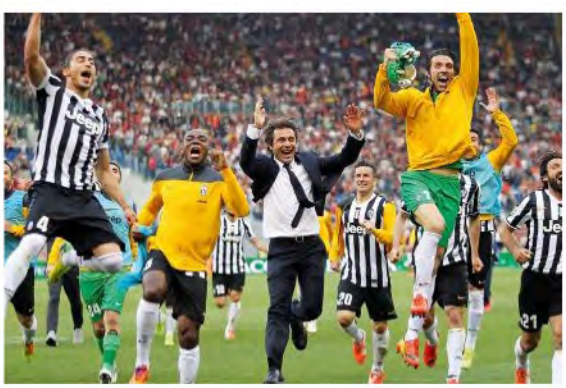
The police and football federation officials have defended their handling of the situation at the Cup Final by arguing that, in the powder-keg atmosphere of the Olimpico, the major priority was to ensure that the match took place.

The authorities were worried about the prospect of 60,000 Napoli and Fiorentina fans exiting the stadium at the same time. As it was, there were no serious post-match incidents because the Fiorentina fans were escorted out immediately after the final whistle while Napoli's fans remained in the stadium for the post-match celebrations.

Arguably, the most worrying sequel to the day's events came a week later when Roma fans at the Olimpico – and fans at games in Germany, Romania and Turkey – displayed not only "Free Speziale" banners but also their support for De Santis. Italian police are now worried about what will happen at Roma games next season. Will other supporters go looking for revenge in relation to the attack on Esposito? Do the banners around Europe mean that Roma's Champions League games next season are now at risk?

In March 2004, Roma's Francesco Totti was, like Hamsik, forced into a similarly humiliating pitch-side negotiation with his club's ultras. Prior to the derby against Lazio, a rumour – subsequently proven to be totally unfounded – had circulated among fans that a child had been killed in pre-match skirmishes between police and supporters. To the eternal shame of Roma, Lazio and Totti, the Roma ultras

Meeting...Hamsik goes to see the ultras



All over...Juve after the last game of the season

COACH OF THE YEAR
RUDI GARCIA (Roma, *above*)
Believes his side can go one better next term and lift the Serie A title.

PLAYER OF THE YEAR
CARLOS TEVEZ (Juventus)
Outstanding in Serie A but not deemed good enough for Argentina at the World Cup.

NEWCOMER OF THE YEAR
DOMENICO BERARDI (Sassuolo)
Inspired last season's Serie B champions to a second season in the top flight.

demanded that the game be suspended and at half-time they got their way.

One of the Roma ultras who stood pitch side that night to "convince" Totti was De Santis, the man allegedly at the centre of this season's shootings. In 10 years, Italian football has not made a lot of progress on the ultra front.

Serie A anticlimax

The ugly events surrounding the Cup Final overshadowed Juventus claiming the Italian championship that same weekend. The end was, however, something of an anticlimax as the title arrived while Juve's players were taking a Sunday afternoon nap in their pre-match hotel outside Turin prior to Monday's home game against Atalanta. Roma's 4-1 shock collapse away to Catania ensured Juve were champions for a record 30th time.

By becoming the first team ever to reach 102 points in an Italian season, Antonio Conte's team were worthy winners, setting another landmark with their 33 league victories for the season.

However, while three Serie A titles in succession is obviously a fantastic achievement, it is surely time for Juve to prove themselves in Europe.

Eliminations by Bayern Munich in last year's Champions League quarter-finals and Benfica in this season's Europa League semi-finals would suggest that Juve still have ground to make up. And, to that end, fans are watching the ongoing contract negotiations between club president Andrea Agnelli and Conte with bated breath.

Many believe that Conte is looking for some serious reinforcements. If Juventus yield to temptation and sell such talents as French midfielder Paul Pogba rather than buy a couple of big names to support him then Conte could be on his way. Given the extraordinary job he has done at Juventus over the last three years, he will not be short of work offers.

In second place, Roma played some very attractive football at times, while Rafa Benitez did well to lead Napoli to third place on his return to Italian football, and both clubs will join Juve in the Champions League next season.

While Fiorentina, Internazionale and Torino will compete in the Europa League, Milan miss out on continental competition. Their disappointing season could yet see Dutch coach Clarence Seedorf, who was only appointed in January, depart.

While the relegation of Catania, Bologna and Livorno may have come as no great surprise, the big shock down at the bottom was that Sassuolo managed to survive. They live to fight another day in Serie A, where they will be joined next season by Palermo, Empoli and the winners of the second-tier promotion play-offs. **WS**

WHAT THE PAPERS SAY

JUVE GET SHIRTY

Juventus players celebrated their latest title success by wearing T-shirts with the message: "There is no 2 without 3". While acknowledging the club's third successive championship, it also juxtaposed the numbers in such a way as to also read as "32" – the number of Serie A titles that they believe they have won.

The league does not recognise Juve's triumphs of 2005 and 2006 – of which the club were later stripped in the wake of the Calciopoli scandal – and only recognise 30 championships.

KLAAS-JAN DROPPERT
in The Hague

Ajax march on

Four on the trot for De Boer

A fourth consecutive title in three-and-a-half years for Ajax coach Frank De Boer demonstrates the virtues of consistency in a league that becomes more of a level playing field every year. Before the winter break there were seven different leaders, but during the final 18 games there was only ever the Amsterdam club in pole position.

Yet despite De Boer's remarkable record, he won't have been happy with his side's overall record this season. Not only was the title won with the lowest number of points since the introduction of three for a win in 1995, he admits that his team didn't play attractive football too often. On top of that, there was early elimination in the Champions League once again, followed by the same fate in the Europa League.

But the real low point came in the Dutch Cup Final against PEC Zwolle, who had never won any silverware before. Ajax took an early lead, but the game was twice held up after the club's hooligan following threw flares onto the De Kuip pitch. Zwolle, who were only promoted from the second tier in 2012, fought back to humiliate Ajax 5-1.

The cup-winners will now enter next season's Europa League, along with Twente – who were forced to field a young side due to financial problems – PSV and play-off winners Groningen. Feyenoord join Ajax in the second Champions League place after finishing as runners-up.

PSV were disappointing. With talents such as Zakaria Bakkali and Karim Rekik in their ranks, the Eindhoven club trailed Ajax by just one point before collapsing and finishing 12 adrift in fourth place. But it probably wasn't a coincidence that this happened in the period when coach Phillip Cocu was forced to hand over his duties to assistant Ernest Faber due to a tumour in his back.

Despite Alfred Finnbogason being the league's top scorer with 29 goals, fifth-place Heerenveen missed out on Europe, along with AZ – who coach Marco Van Basten left Heerenveen for at the end of the season.

Vitesse under orders

Top at the winter break, Vitesse looked to have a chance of winning the title – as predicted by chairman Merab Jordania four years ago – before falling away. He was replaced by Aleksandr Chigirinski, another close ally of Chelsea's Roman Abramovich, but not before claiming that Vitesse were under orders from London not to be champions. A club director, Joost De Wit, then accused Jordania of threatening to cut off his fingers.

Vitesse's season was much like the performance of their striker Lucas Piazon. On loan from Chelsea, the Brazilian was one of the best players in the Eredivisie before the break, scoring and setting up many goals. But in 2014 he faded badly, didn't score, ended up on the bench and, without anybody noticing, was back in England before the play-offs had started.

PEC Zwolle weren't the only minnows finishing the season with a smile on their faces. According to just about everyone, promoted Cambuur and Go Ahead Eagles were doomed to go straight back down. But both sides were a joy to watch, finishing 12th and 13th respectively. There was, however, a down side at Cambuur, where hooligans forced coach Dwight Lodeweges to quit with a couple of matches to go after he announced he would be moving to arch-rivals Heerenveen this summer.

Den Haag also had a remarkable rise. Bottom in February, they replaced coach Maurice Steijn with his assistant Henk Fraser and eventually finished ninth.

At the bottom, the curtain fell for Roda JC, RKC Waalwijk and NEC Nijmegen. For Roda it was, after 41 years, the first demotion in the club's history. All four clubs of the southern province of Limburg, where the foundations of Holland's pro game were laid in the 1950s, will now play in the second division next season.

Willem II return to the top flight after a one-year absence, along with Excelsior and Dordrecht – clubs with two of the smallest budgets and stadiums of all the country's professional teams. **WS**

COACH OF THE SEASON
RON JANS (PEC Zwolle)
The 55-year-old led the club to a first-ever Dutch Cup triumph, having had previous success during spells with Groningen and Heerenveen.

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
LASSE SCHONE (Ajax)
Despite being "exiled" to the right wing by De Boer, the Danish playmaker was the champions' best performer, making a crucial contribution to the title with his free-kicks and creativity.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
MEMPHIS DEPAY (PSV)
Physically strong winger whose unpredictable moves not only led to his breakthrough at club level but also an international debut.

> "Players win matches, but teams win championships"
> Ajax coach Frank De Boer

Joy...Thulani Serero lifts the Eredivisie shield as Ajax are crowned Dutch champions for a record-extending 33rd time

TOM KUNDERT
in Lisbon

Treble...Benfica celebrate winning the Portuguese Cup to complete a domestic clean sweep

The dawn of a new era?

Shifting sands in the Portuguese football landscape

When Jorge Jesus claimed of his side in the summer of 2013 that "Benfica are close to achieving hegemony in Portuguese football", the coach was widely ridiculed. Portugal's biggest club were still reeling from a disastrous final fortnight of a season which left them trophy-less after looking set for silverware on three fronts. Ten months later, as Benfica swept to a domestic treble, his bold words no longer seem so fanciful.

The "Eagles" have been pushing Porto hard from the moment Jesus took charge five years ago. As well as a league title in his debut season, there is a strong argument that Benfica then threw away the championship in two successive campaigns, before 2013-14 ultimately proved tangible evidence of a power shift.

From the turn of the year, Benfica steamrollered the domestic competition. A beautifully balanced side combined impenetrable defence – built on the centre-back partnership of Luisao and Ezequiel Garay in front of goalkeeper, Jan Oblak – with the flair and creative attacking one would expect from any Jesus team. Nico Gaitan, Eduardo Salvio and Lazar Markovic sprinkled the gold dust, while the tireless Enzo Perez connected it all up magically in midfield.

> "It could have been four out of four trophies, but it was important to win the three national competitions"
>
> Benfica coach Jorge Jesus

Looking at the bigger picture, for the first time in a generation, an upwardly mobile Benfica has coincided with alarming signs of fragility at Porto.

Porto's domination of Portuguese football can be traced back to the election of club president Jorge Nuno Pinto da Costa in 1982. In the subsequent 32 years they were crowned national champions 20 times. Compare that to the pre-Pinto da Costa days, when they had won only seven titles in their entire history.

But as the 76-year-old president nears retirement, cracks have started to appear in the empire, with succession issues reportedly causing friction and fragmentation at an institution hitherto known for its unity of vision and action.

Boardroom malaise

The malaise in the Porto boardroom has been mirrored by abject performances on the pitch. Porto failed to win any of their home Champions League matches for the first time in their history, while defeat by Benfica in the semi-finals of the two domestic cups – despite their opponents playing for an hour with 10 men on both occasions – were particularly hard for the fans to swallow.

But it is what is happening in the capital 300km to the south that offers the strongest indications of a new era in Portuguese football. Benfica president Luis Filipe Vieira has overseen a radical overhaul at the club, righting the wrongs of years of mismanagement and above all eradicating a culture of chronic instability. Prior to Jesus' appointment, in the summer of 2009, the club had had 23 head coaches in 20 seasons.

Order has also been brought to Benfica's finances. An aggressive marketing drive has made Benfica the club with the highest number of paying members in the world, the inception of an in-house TV channel has proved profitable, increased gate receipts have followed success on the pitch, and a number of huge transfer windfalls have boosted the coffers.

With Sporting Lisbon also enjoying an upturn in fortunes, a shifting of the sands is playing out in Portuguese football's traditional three-way power struggle.

It is, however, too early to write off Porto. At the turn of the century they went three years without winning the league, only to come back stronger than ever, lifting the championship in nine of the next 11 seasons.

Likewise, claiming Benfica have achieved hegemony after one, albeit all-conquering, season is premature. But, as it stands, they have reassumed the mantle as the team to beat. WS

NATIONAL CHAMPIONS

The league has never been won by a side from any city other than Lisbon (Benfica, Sporting and Belenenses) or Porto (Porto and Boavista)

PLAYER OF THE SEASON

JAN OBLAK (Benfica)

Slovenian goalkeeper who took over from Artur Moraes in December and kept 22 clean sheets in 26 matches. "I'm working to be the best goalkeeper in the world," he told *A Bola* in an interview at the end of the season. He's in with a chance.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON

WILLIAM CARVALHO (Sporting Lisbon)

The holding midfielder had an outstanding debut year. Following in the footsteps of Luis Figo and Cristiano Ronaldo, Sporting may have unearthed another talent destined for the very top.

COACH OF THE SEASON

JORGE JESUS (Benfica)

Redemption after last year's spectacular end-of-season collapse and a poor start to the new campaign. Benfica president Luis Filipe Vieira resisted the temptation to pull the trigger and his faith was richly rewarded.

GAVIN HAMILTON
in London

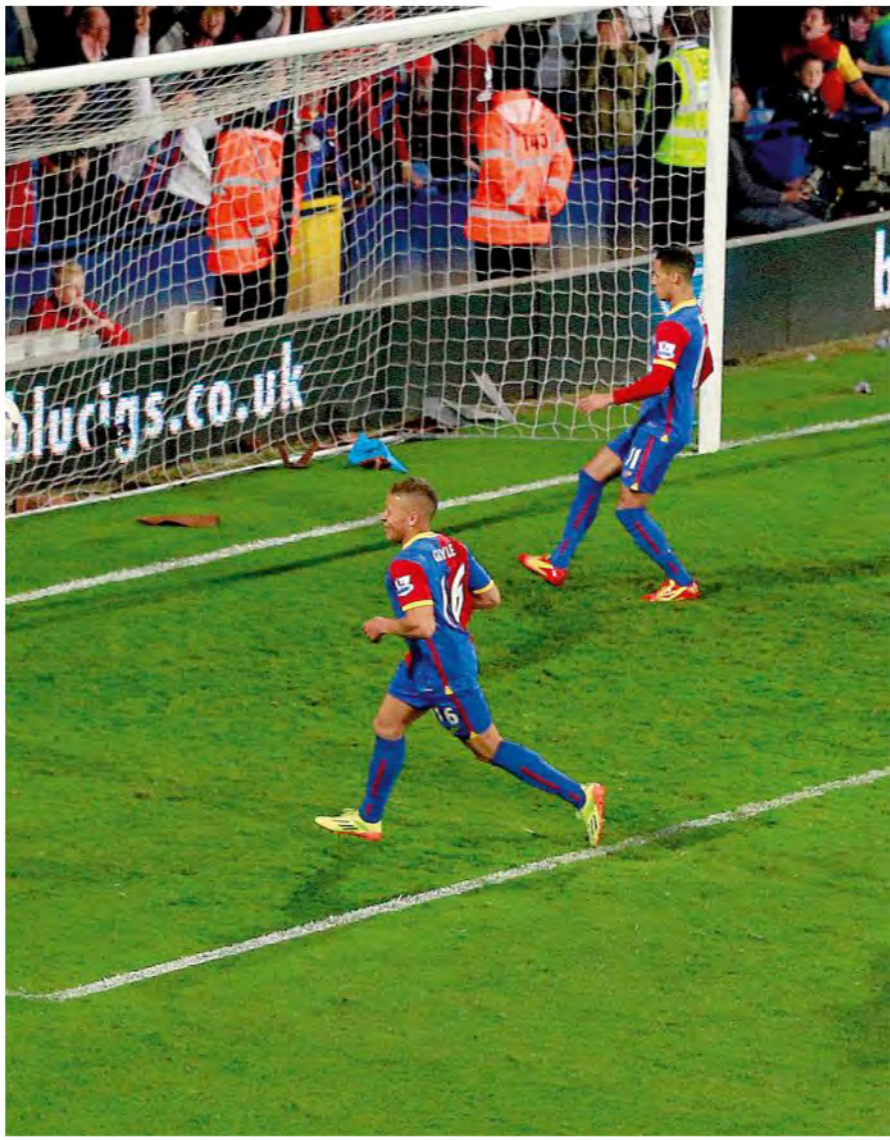
City pounce after Liverpool slip

Manuel Pellegrini's side claim their second title in three seasons

The first Premier League campaign of the post-Alex Ferguson era had promised to be fiercely competitive – and so it proved. Manchester City, Liverpool, Chelsea and Arsenal all had legitimate claims on the title at different stages of the season, with Manchester United nowhere to be seen as David Moyes, dubbed the "Chosen One", struggled in his new surroundings.

Liverpool had been on course for their first title in 24 years after an 11-game winning streak in March and April that included a crucial home victory over City. But defeat at home to Chelsea, followed by a 3-3 draw at Crystal Palace, after being 3-0 up with 15 minutes to play, handed the initiative to City, who duly won their second title in three years.

Liverpool exceeded expectations under Brendan Rodgers, but they set out to beat Chelsea when a point would have maintained their league position, allowing the visitors to hit them on the counter-attack after an uncharacteristic mistake by captain Steven Gerrard. Against Palace, Rodgers' attacking enthusiasm again got the better of him again, with Liverpool failing to shut up shop and allowing a remarkable Palace comeback.



Shock comeback...Dwight Gayle (far left) after equalising for Crystal Palace against Liverpool

City and Liverpool both scored more than 100 league goals, with City in particular earning praise for their attacking outlook. Chilean coach Manuel Pellegrini, in his first season in England, was quick to emphasise how he had changed the team's style.

"I am not criticising other styles or comparing," he said. "I like to play one way, and for me it was very important to give the reasons and to have the trust of the players to change the way they played before."

Mourinho rebuilding

Chelsea looked content with third place, not least because Jose Mourinho said the season would be written off for rebuilding purposes. They performed well in the Champions League as the only English team to reach the quarter-finals, but a lack of striking options – not least because Mourinho sanctioned the loan of Romelu Lukaku to Everton – proved their undoing.

Mourinho had returned to England as the self-styled "Happy One" but won few friends with his continued sniping at the authorities and opponents, including a dismissal of Arsene Wenger as a "professional loser".

Arsenal's subsequent victory in the FA Cup Final ended the club's nine-year run without a trophy. However, they made life difficult for themselves at Wembley, conceding two set-piece goals in the opening 10 minutes to Hull City

PREMIER LEAGUE 2013-14: DAYS SPENT AT THE TOP OF THE TABLE

NEWCOMER OF THE YEAR
ADAM LALLANA (Southampton, *above*)
After playing for Southampton in three different divisions, his outstanding form earned an England debut, a World Cup place and a possible summer move to a Champions League club.

MANAGER OF THE SEASON
MANUEL PELLEGRINI (Manchester City)
The Chilean was dubbed "This Charming Man" by City fans for his attacking football – not to mention the league title and the League Cup.

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
LUIS SUAREZ (Liverpool)
The Uruguayan was a reformed character as he scored 31 league goals to finish as the joint-top scorer in Europe with Cristiano Ronaldo.

> "It has been a brilliant season, and I would say of all the sides we kept going longest in all four competitions"
>
> Manchester City manager Manuel Pellegrini

and they only clinched victory in the second half of extra time.

Arsenal had been top of the league at the start of the year, but the now-familiar collapse in February and March, following injuries to key players, left them struggling to fight off a challenge from Everton for the fourth Champions League spot. Everton enjoyed a revival under new manager Roberto Martinez, whose attacking tactics were in stark contrast to the safety-first approach of his predecessor Moyes.

Manchester United began the season as defending champions but ended it in seventh place, with Moyes sacked and the club awaiting nervously the arrival of Louis Van Gaal. The Dutchman will be given a large fund for the signings needed to replenish the side and fill the gaps vacated by Nemanja Vidic, Rio Ferdinand and, most significantly, Ryan Giggs. The Welshman stepped in as a temporary replacement for Moyes and will now act as assistant to Van Gaal. His retirement – after a 23-year career at Old Trafford that included 13 league titles – marks the end of an era.

Triumphant...City skipper Vincent Kompany

Exciting at the bottom

Just as the league title race was exciting and open, so was the relegation battle at the other end of the table. At one stage, the bottom 11 teams were separated by five points, with an unprecedented number of teams unsettled by off-the-field events. There was, however, no final-day drama, with Cardiff City, Fulham and Norwich City effectively relegated before the final round of matches.

For Cardiff's eccentric owner Vincent Tan, the decision to replace manager Malky Mackay with former Manchester United striker Ole Gunnar Solskjaer backfired. Solskjaer had enjoyed success in his first managerial job with Molde in Norway but found himself out of his depth, winning fewer points from his 18 games in charge than Mackay: Solskjaer averaged 0.8 points per game, compared to 0.94 per game for Mackay.

Felix Magath, the first German manager in the English top flight, was Fulham's third managerial appointment of the season. New owner Shahid Khan had lost patience with Martin Jol and Rene Meulensteen before alighting on Magath, but the German's disciplinarian approach failed to alter Fulham's course and they dropped down after 13 seasons in the top tier.

Norwich made a late managerial change, sacking Chris Hughton with five games to go, but it proved to be too little, too late.

Other managerial switches proved to be more successful. Swansea City, on a year-long poor run following last season's League Cup win, rallied after the departure of Michael Laudrup and the arrival of former captain Gary Monk. West Brom's board dithered over a replacement for the sacked Steve Clarke but Pepe Mel eventually did enough to keep them up, although he too departed at the end of the campaign.

Sunderland, bottom at Christmas after a disastrous start under Paolo Di Canio, and Crystal Palace, the pre-season relegation favourites, underwent dramatic reversals in fortune following the appointments of Gus Poyet and Tony Pulis respectively. **WS**

VICTOR GUSEV
in Moscow

Defending champions triumph again

CSKA win title in dramatic finale

CSKA emerged victorious to retain the Premier League after it was staged in an autumn-summer format for the second time. Nine points off the lead in March, Leonid Slutski's team ended the campaign with a 10-game winning run that saw them beat Moscow rivals Lokomotiv – who had led for much of the season – with a solitary goal from Serbian winger Zoran Tosic on the final day to pip Zenit and Lokomotiv to top spot.

CSKA triumphed despite losing Brazilian striker Vagner Love, who joined Chinese side Shandong Luneng for €12million, and Japanese playmaker Keysuke Honda, on a free to Milan, after the winter break. Deprived of proper replacements, Slutski led the club to a remarkable comeback in which Ivorian striker Seydou Doumbia was a key figure, finishing as the league's top scorer with 18 goals in 22 games.

They will be joined in the Champions League next season by runners-up Zenit, who threw away their title chances in the final home game of the season.

Top of the table with two games left to play, Zenit were trailing Dynamo Moscow 4-2 when some of their fans rushed onto the pitch. One of them attacked the visitors' captain, international defender Vladimir Granat, and the referee was forced to abandon the game, with Dynamo subsequently awarded a 3-0 forfeit victory.

Inner conflict

Portuguese coach Andre Villas Boas, who replaced Italy's Luciano Spalletti at Zenit, called the team's second place a disaster. Spalletti, who had led the team to two national titles, had fallen victim to the inner conflict between local and foreign players over the huge salaries offered to players such as Hulk by Zenit's powerful owner Gazprom.

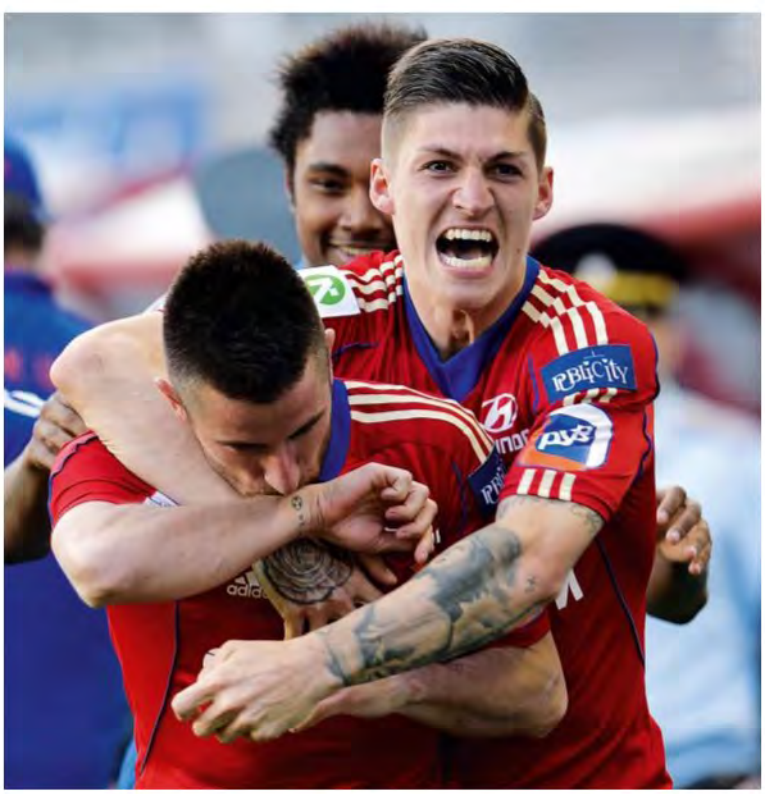
Third-place Lokomotiv will join Dynamo and Krasnodar in the Europa League next term, along with Russian Cup winners Rostov, who claimed the first major trophy in their history by beating Krasnodar on penalties after a goalless draw in the Final. Rostov will now face CSKA in the season-opening Russian Super Cup on July 27.

The country's most popular team, Spartak Moscow, will be without European football for the first time in many years after finishing sixth. So the only foreign side visiting their new stadium, which is due to open in the summer on the outskirts of the capital, will be Red Star Belgrade, who have agreed to replace Dynamo Kiev as the inaugural opponents due to the recent political confrontation between Russia and Ukraine.

There will be four new teams in the top flight next season, with second-tier winners Mordoviya Saransk and runners-up Arsenal Tula replacing relegated Anzhi and Volga Nizhni Novgorod, while USSR 1960 champions Torpedo Moscow and Ufa are also promoted after beating Kryliya Sovetov Samara and Tom Tomsk respectively in the qualification games.

Torpedo are coached by Alexander Borodyuk, the former Dynamo and Russia striker, who was an assistant to Guus Hiddink when he was in charge of the national side. Another Dynamo forward, Igor Kolyvanov, is in charge of Ufa, while Spartak legend Dmitri Alenichev leads Arsenal Tula. Alenichev is the only Russian to have won both the Champions League and the UEFA Cup, which he achieved with Porto under Jose Mourinho.

While the league may be increased from 16 to 18 teams in the future, the autumn-spring format is set to stay. One of the major reasons is the opportunity to play decisive games on fine pitches in May, rather than the mud of November like it used to be in the past. WS



Decisive...CSKA scorer Tosic (left) and Steven Zuber celebrate the goal that beat Lokomotiv

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
ROMAN SHIROKOV (Krasnodar)
Russia's player of the year in 2013 as Zenit's playmaker, he moved to Krasnodar and helped the club finish fifth and win a Europa League place.

COACH OF THE SEASON
LEONID KUCHUK (Lokomotiv Moscow, *above*)
The Belorussian boss joined Lokomotiv from Kuban Krasnodar in the summer of 2013 and almost led the club to the league title.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
YURI LODYGIN (Zenit)
Brought in from Skoda Xanthi of Greece when Zenit's first-choice goalkeeper was injured, he performed well enough to claim a place in the national team.

SIMON HILL
in Sydney

Three in four for Roar

Brisbane's domestic dominance continues

Only in the Grand Final was success ever really in doubt for Brisbane Roar, who came from a goal down with four minutes to play against Western Sydney Wanderers to claim their third A-League title in four seasons. Trailing to a 56th-minute goal from Matthew Spiranovic, Besart Berisha took the game into extra-time, where Roar's good luck charm, substitute Henrique, hit the winner.

Under the guidance of English-born coach Mike Mulvey, Brisbane won the regular season Premiership at a canter, with German playmaker Thomas Broich ably supported by the fiery Berisha, who will join Melbourne Victory next season, and midfielder Luke Brattan. The template for the team's playing style was set by Ange Postecoglou, who is now in charge of the national side, but Mulvey deserves credit for steadying a ship that had listed badly under Rado Vidosic.

Western Sydney Wanderers were second in the Premiership and the Grand Final, although consolation may come in the shape of the Asian Champions League, where they have become only the second Australian team (after Adelaide United) to make the quarter-finals of the competition.

Central Coast Mariners again defied all the odds to finish third after a season of upheaval, during which last year's champions lost their coach Graham Arnold, their chairman and most of their title-winning team. Arnold's replacement Phil Moss got them to within a game of the Grand Final, where they were hindered by a ridiculous travel schedule which saw them play away to Wanderers just 24 hours after arriving home from a Champions League game in Japan.

Fiery...Berisha (left) is joining Victory

Finding his feet

Melbourne Victory were disrupted by the early-season departure of coach Postecoglou and star player Mitch Nichols. But Kevin Muscat finally found his coaching feet and they will be better for the experience next season.

At Sydney, the influence of Alessandro Del Piero diminished, culminating in him parting company with the club after a two-year love affair, and coach Frank Farina paid the price with his job. He has been replaced by the aforementioned Arnold, who left the A-League to join Vegalta Sendai amid much optimism but returns less than six months later, having failed to win a game in the J.League.

Adelaide United's attacking approach yielded goals aplenty at both ends, while Newcastle Jets missed out on the finals for the fourth year in a row and Perth Glory self-imploded after the rather odd dismissal of Alistair Edwards due to accusations of nepotism towards his two sons, Ryan and Cameron, both of whom he'd added to the squad. Wellington Phoenix and Melbourne Heart both started and ended poorly.

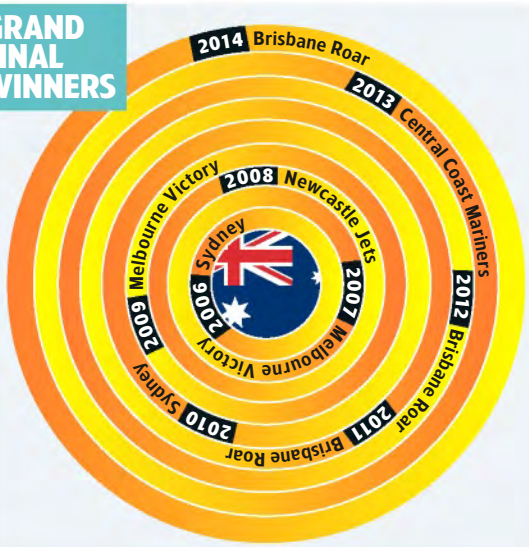
As Sheikh Mansour's newest acquisition for Manchester City, Heart are expected to be re-branded as Melbourne City – although the A-League's salary cap means they won't be able to spend their way to the title anytime soon. WS

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
ADAM TAGGART
(Newcastle Jets, *above*)
Won the golden boot with 16 goals despite playing in a struggling team.

COACH OF THE SEASON
MIKE MULVEY (Brisbane Roar)
Won the Premiership and Grand Final double in his first full season in charge.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
JAMES TROISI (Melbourne Victory)
Excelled in his first season on home soil at club level to earn a place in the preliminary World Cup squad.

GRAND FINAL WINNERS



NICK BIDWELL
in Munich

Pep comes up with a Plan B

Bayern's coach proves he is not the one-trick pony some say he is

Pep Guardiola's first campaign at the Bayern Munich controls was an odyssey of critical extremes. He was canonised as his word-perfect side claimed the Club World Cup and utterly dominated the Bundesliga title race; excommunicated following the 5-0 Champions League semi-final loss to Real Madrid; and then finally restored to his saintly pedestal with a 2-0 extra-time victory over Borussia Dortmund in the German Cup Final to secure the club's 10th domestic double.

No coach ever needed victory in the domestic cup more than Guardiola. With his reputation badly damaged by the Real debacle – and pundits queuing up to slam the ineffectiveness of his cherished possession game, a lack of Plan B and the constant first XI rotation – his only chance of outrunning the posse was to lift the trophy. And, fortunately for him, his side were able to oblige, propelled over the finishing line by late, late goals from Arjen Robben and Thomas Muller.

So much for the theory that Guardiola does not do alternative strategies. For his battle of wits with Dortmund counterpart Jurgen Klopp, the Catalan rang the radical changes. He employed a brand-new 3-4-3 formation, a gameplan built around a deep-lying defensive line and more directness in attack. He also made a number of big personnel calls, especially the blackballing of Croat striker Mario Mandzukic and the inclusion of rookie left-sided wing-back Pierre Hojbjerg.

Prioritising pragmatism, aggression and discipline over *tiki-taka* swagger, Guardiola found another way to win, one based on numerical superiority in midfield and the stifling of Dortmund's renowned threat on the counter. Guardiola, a one-trick pony? Not according to Bayern chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge who enthused: "Our coach has brilliant traits. Pep, you suit FC Bayern wonderfully. I'm happy you're with us."

Not that Bayern's night of glory in the German capital was solely decided by Guardiola's canniness and the desire of his charges. Dortmund were convinced they had been denied a legitimate goal when a second-half Mats Hummels header seemed to be cleared from behind the line by Bayern centre-back Dante. But with Germany still opposed to video technology, the ghost goal syndrome will continue to stalk the scene.

"If that Dortmund goal had been awarded, it would have changed everything," declared a refreshingly honest Guardiola. "This has been my most important year as a coach. I've learnt a lot, become a better coach and now know the mentality in Germany. Even if you win everything, it's not enough."

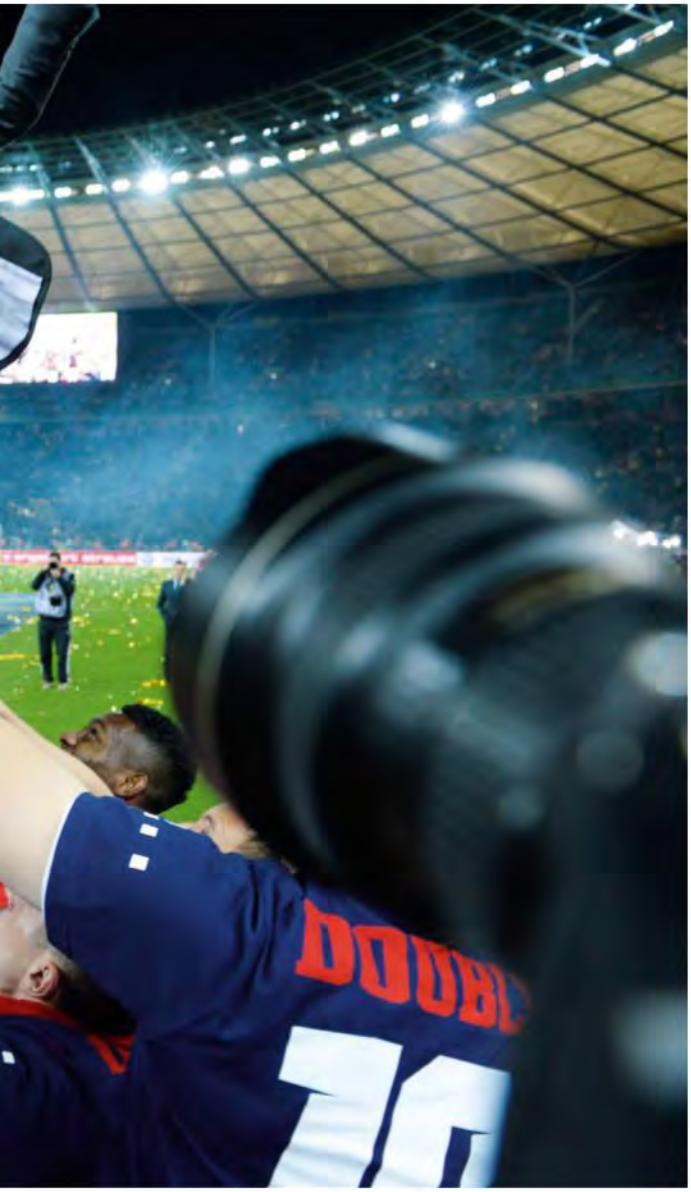
Stunning achievements

Falling flat on their face against Real should by no means detract from Bayern's stunning achievements in the 2013-14 Bundesliga. Good enough to have wrapped up the championship spoils seven weeks from the end of the season, the Bavarians' relationship with the rest of the league was that of the dismissive aristocrat and his indentured peasant servant. The figures speak for themselves: 29 victories in 34 rounds, 90 points, 94 goals scored and a miserly 23 conceded.

Beaten only twice in late-season dead rubbers – a 1-0 loss in Augsburg and 3-0

Flying start...coach Guardiola is thrown in the air by his players after they completed the double

MOST SEASONS SPENT IN BUNDESLIGA



Among a host of new records set by Bayern was a 53-game unbeaten league run, which ended with a 1-0 defeat at Augsburg

reverse at home to Dortmund – Bayern probably wish they had not been in such a hurry to clinch their 24th national title, the end of season winding-down exercise leaving them vulnerable to such streetwise Champions League fighters as Real.

Although finishing 19 points behind Bayern and losing more games than they would have liked (seven), runners-up Dortmund will nonetheless feel satisfied with their efforts. Decimated by injuries – especially at the back – for most of the campaign, coach Klopp did extremely well to guide the Ruhr club to championship silver and a spot in the last eight of the Champions League, where they gave Real Madrid the fright of their lives in the second-leg at Signal Iduna Park.

In a season when so many of their regular starters were stacked up in the infirmary, the Yellow-and-Blacks could easily have folded. Yet thanks to Klopp's powers of motivation, the quality of the second-stringers introduced – particularly left-back Erik Durm and Greek central defender Sokratis Papastathopoulos – Marco Reus' attacking brilliance and the firepower of Polish striker Robert Lewandowski, they delivered all they could.

Lewandowski, who is due to move to Bayern this summer, went out with a bang, scoring 20 times to make him the league's top marksman.

Rarely given credit for his good work over the last 18 months, Schalke's underrated coach Jens Keller proved himself anything but a Gelsenkirchen office boy, guiding the Royal Blues to the third and final automatic Champions League qualifying slot. At the winter break, Schalke's chronically inconsistent young side had looked light years away from stepping onto the podium in May, but they went into overdrive in the New Year, achieving their best-ever points haul in the second-half of a season (36).

Despite a strong challenge from a resurgent Wolfsburg side, Bayer Leverkusen just did enough to secure fourth place and now can look forward to a Champions League eliminator in August. Incongruously closer to the relegation zone than the top of the table – ending up 29 points adrift of Bayern – the Rhinelanders had their share of jittery moments and, with five games to go, were sufficiently concerned to replace coach Sami Hyypia with under-19 boss Sascha Lewandowski, who promptly waved his magic wand and collected 13 vital points.

Controversial...with no video technology, Dante clears as Dortmund are denied in the Cup Final

COACH OF THE SEASON
PEP GUARDIOLA (Bayern Munich)
In his first season in German football, the Catalan entertained and won four trophies: UEFA Super Cup, Club World Club, Bundesliga and German Cup. He also made tremendous strides in changing habits and putting his own personal stamp on the Bayern brand.

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
ARJEN ROBBEN (Bayern Munich)
Two years after being jeered by the fans, the Holland international has completely silenced the Allianz Arena boo-boys with his week-in-week-out brilliance on the right flank.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
CHRISTOPH KRAMER (Borussia Monchengladbach, *above*)
On loan from Bayer Leverkusen, the 23-year-old defensive midfielder had an impressive season and was called up by national coach Joachim Low.

Bad decisions

In marked contrast with the success on a shoestring of Mainz and Augsburg – who came a highly commendable seventh and eight – traditional German powerhouse Hamburg once again demonstrated their remarkable capacity for bad decisions in the boardroom, disunity at all levels and catastrophic performances on the pitch.

One of the Bundesliga's founding clubs, Hamburg have never been relegated from the top flight, but they came perilously close this time around, only escaping direct demotion by the skin of their teeth and then scraping through on the away-goals rule in a relegation play-off against Greuther Furth.

Eintracht Braunschweig and Nuremberg fell through the trapdoor with barely a whimper, and their places will be taken next season by second division champions Cologne and surprise package Paderborn, for whom it will be their first-ever Bundesliga adventure. WS

JOHN CHAPMAN
in Brussels

Three in a row for Anderlecht

But success not as straightforward as it may seem

Play-off push...Anderlecht's record signing Mitrovic in the thick of it against Standard Liege

On the surface, Anderlecht's third successive league title looks to be the continuation of one club's domination of the domestic championship, But, in reality, nothing could be further from the truth.

Once the dust had settled, chairman Roger Vanden Stock said that Anderlecht had only won this season because no one else wanted to be champions. The club were crowned champions even though they suffered 11 defeats – their most in a single campaign for 34 years. And the reason for their success despite this? The infamous league play-off system.

In August, the defending champions lost Lucas Biglia, Dieumerci Mbokani, Milan Jovanovic, Marcin Wasilewski and Tom De Sutter. and the team was so short of experience that Vanden Stock said it would be a "season of transition".

Even so, they brought in 18 year-old striker Aleksander Mitrovic from Partizan Belgrade for a club record €5million and there were high hopes for teenagers Massimo Bruno and Dennis Praet.

Caused uproar

As for the opposition, Standard Liege appointed Israeli under-21s coach Guy Luzon after chairman Roland Duchatelet had caused uproar by sacking popular boss Mircea Rednic the previous season the day after the club had qualified for the Europa League.

Luzon proceeded to guide Standard to the top of the league and they stayed there for the rest of the regular season, with Michy Batshuayi and Imoh Ezekiel scoring freely. Admittedly, Luzon gained league points at the expense of his club's Europa League and Belgian Cup campaigns, where he frequently fielded weakened teams, but Standard were top and the fans' discontent with Duchatelet was pushed under the carpet.

Despite talk of a season of transition, by January Anderlecht appeared to think that the title could be theirs – after all anything is possible in the play-offs – and they tried to sign Thorgan Hazard of Zulte Waregem, Standard's Batshuayi and Steven Defour from Porto. However, nothing came of any of those approaches and, in a move smacking of desperation, they signed journeyman striker David Pollet from Charleroi for €2m instead.

By the end of the regular season, Standard were four points ahead of Club Brugge – who had replaced Juan Carlos Garrido with Michel Preud'homme in September – and 10 clear of Anderlecht. But when the play-off system kicked in, with the top six going into a mini-league with half of their points being deducted, Standard's lead over Club Brugge and Anderlecht was reduced to two and five points respectively.

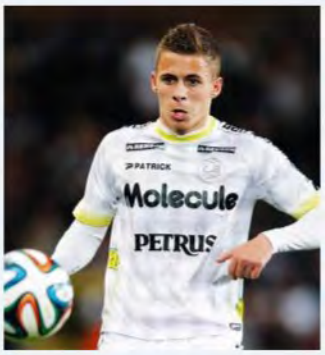
A major turning point came a week before the play-offs started when Anderlecht sacked John Van den Brom. The Dutch coach had looked totally lost for some time, constantly changing the team and lacking a consistent way of paying. Bruno and Praet had been casualties – either being played out of position or dropped on a regular basis – and only goalkeeper Silvio Proto showed consistent form.

Van den Brom was replaced by assistant coach Besnik Hasi, who had played over 100 games for Anderlecht a decade or so ago. The Kosovar-Albanian introduced organisation where there had been chaos, providing some much-needed discipline and re-installing confidence in his talented young charges.

Although Standard beat Anderlecht in the opening play-off fixture, Standard and Club Brugge then lost games they should have won as Hasi's side climbed the table and effectively won the title with one game to play after a victory away to Zulte Waregem – that club's first home defeat in 21 games.

While Anderlecht and runners-up Standard go into next season's Champions League, Zulte Waregem and Club Brugge are joined in the Europa League by Lokeren, who beat Zulte Waregem 1-0 in the Belgian Cup Final.

Leuven and Mons were relegated and they are replaced by second division champions Westerlo and play-off winners Mouscron-Peruwelz, who go into the Belgian top flight for the first time in their history. WS



COACH OF THE YEAR
PETER MAES (Lokeren)
Won the Belgian Cup for the second time in three years, qualified for Europe and reached the play-offs.

PLAYER OF THE YEAR
THORGAN HAZARD
(Zulte Waregem, *above*)
On loan from Chelsea, he matured on and off the field.

NEWCOMER OF THE YEAR
YOURI TIELEMANS (Anderlecht)
A creative midfielder of immense promise, he made his debut aged 16.

STEVE MENARY
in Vatican City

Holy See and the beautiful game

Football plays its part

As internationals go, the game at the Stadio Petriano in Rome, just outside the boundaries of the Holy See, was low key to put it mildly. Staged in sight of St Peter's Square, the Vatican City played Monaco for the third time in the last three years, and there were national anthems, flags and marching bands, plus the Monegasque ambassador and two senior Vatican staff in attendance. However, despite being an avowed football fan and having spoken on the social responsibilities of the game in the past, there was no sign of the Pope Francis amid the tiny crowd.

The Vatican team has five managers and Danilo Zennaro, who is one of them, says: "Football is the most popular sport in Italy and all our players are citizens of Italy, they just work in the Vatican. It's very important that outside the office we have a friendly rapport between the employees and, of course, to play sport."

The games against Monaco are organised by Swiss football fan Aurelio Balbis, and he says: "In the first game, in Rome in 2011, Monaco won 2-1 but it was a really challenging game. There were two red cards and two penalties. It was like the Final of the Champions League or the World Cup."

With 15 goals, Marzio Chirieletti was second-highest scorer in this season's Vatican league, the Campionato Vaticano, but the closest the Pope's team came to finding the net at the Stadio Petriano was in forcing an excellent save from Monaco goalkeeper Fabrice Di Franco as the visitors eased to a 2-0 win.

> In the Clericus Cup, blue cards see players sin-binned for five minutes for spiritual reflection

Chirieletti plays for San Pietro, who won this season's Campionato Vaticano in which eight teams – from a side of Swiss Guards (Guardia FC) to one for museum staff (Museu Vaticani) – took part. After a play-off with Santos ended 0-0, San Pietro took the title 5-4 on penalties.

The league ended before the game with Monaco and the same eight clubs are now involved in the Vatican Cup, which has been re-named in memory of Doctor Sergio Valci, the godfather of Vatican football who died in late 2012.

Prior to the Monaco game, the Vatican team visited Sicily for a friendly, but aware that a game with a real state confers some form of legitimacy on their opponents, the Vatican XI prefers "safe" opponents. The next fixture, against a team from St Pauli – the anarchist German second-tier side – may test the virtue of the Vatican side. But these players are very different from the clerics who compete in the Vatican's annual Clericus Cup – which, in addition to red and yellow cards, also has blue cards that see players sin-binned for five minutes for spiritual reflection.

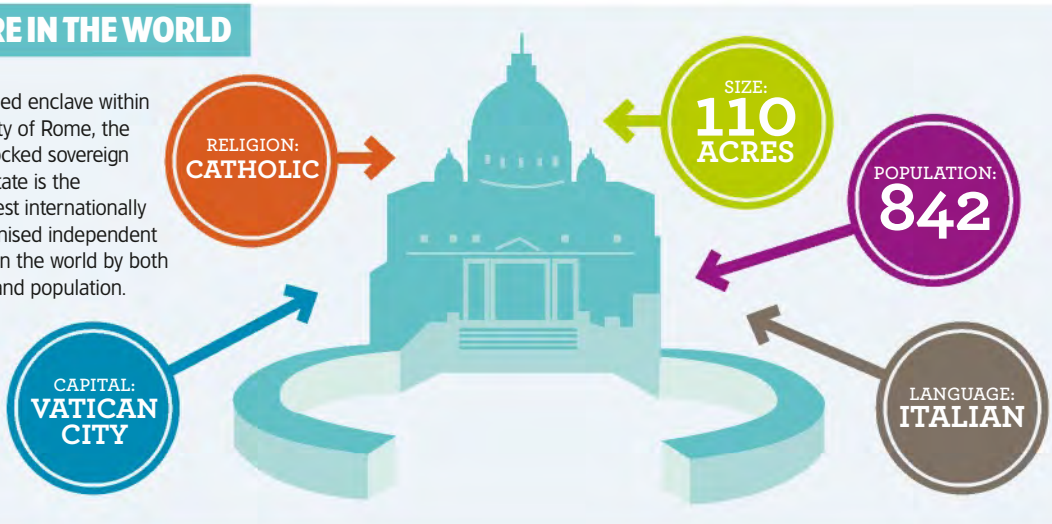
Daniel Russo, an Australian cleric who plays for the North American Martyrs, says: "What the organisers are trying to achieve is the integration in good human activities, one of which is sport, with the life of the church.

"For years, there has been a tradition of people after school hanging around after church playing soccer and that's a good way to build communities." WS

Preparation...the Vatican City side are put through their paces before the game against Monaco

WHERE IN THE WORLD

A walled enclave within the city of Rome, the landlocked sovereign city-state is the smallest internationally recognised independent state in the world by both area and population.



HOWARD JOHNSON
in Paris

Money matters as big two dominate

Financial clout leaves PSG and Monaco out in front

Paris Saint-Germain boss Laurent Blanc, his voice cracked around the edges presumably after enjoying himself just a bit too much, summed up his side's season perfectly in an end-of-season press conference. PSG had finished the campaign on top of the pile with a 4-0 rout of Montpellier in front of their home fans and he was naturally in upbeat mood.

"People came here all season to see attractive football, plenty of goals, and lots of entertainment – and that's what we gave them again today. Let's face it, our supporters have had a really great time this campaign," said the former national-team boss. And he wasn't wrong. With a club record 89 points racked up and an impressive 27 wins in their 38-game programme, no one could deny PSG deserved to finish as champions for the second season in succession. They didn't lose a league game for four-and-a-half months, between early December and mid April, and even an end-of-season stutter, where they drew with lowly Sochaux and lost at home to Rennes, couldn't halt the Parisian juggernaut as they clinched the title with two games to spare.

PSG had turned to "*Le President*" prior to the start of the season after Carlo Ancelotti's decision to take up a Real Madrid offer that the Italian couldn't refuse. Blanc's appointment was greeted in France with some indifference, but he handled the weight of expectation well enough and watched his side retain the title with a nine-point advantage over runners-up Monaco.

Nobody needed to be an expert crystal-ball gazer to predict this particular outcome. PSG and Monaco both had the financial clout to blow away any potential rivals in France and they did so with relative ease. Third-placed Lille ended the campaign a further nine points behind Monaco, such is the gulf that Qatari and Russian megabucks have created between the best and the rest.

Falcao injured

Perhaps the biggest disappointment of the season in the rarified atmosphere of the title race was the fact that Claudio Ranieri's Monaco couldn't push PSG a little bit harder. It was unfortunate that they were forced to compete with one hand behind their back throughout the second half of the campaign after £50million man Radamel Falcao was ruled out for the season with a cruciate-ligament injury.

The Colombian scored nine in 17 games, but once deprived of his predatory instincts Monaco didn't quite have enough spark to haul PSG back. Not even the arrival of Bulgarian Dimitar Berbatov from Fulham in January and his impressive nine goals in 14 appearances could quite dislodge the capital club from top spot. Not when PSG had Zlatan Ibrahimovic.

The Swede's 26 league goals gave PSG an obvious edge. But it also made Uruguayan striker Edinson Cavani's first season in the French capital a difficult one. Despite scoring 16 times, the former Napoli man very publicly played second fiddle to "Ibra" and never truly seemed comfortable in the role.

It's hard to see the battle for the title involving anyone other than PSG and Monaco again next term. Despite PSG's financial slap on the wrist from UEFA for breaking their fairplay rules, and the megabucks divorce of Monaco's Russian owner Dmitry Rybolovlev, neither club will find the cupboard totally bare when it comes to strengthening for next season. Nor should the post-season parting of the ways between Monaco and coach Ranieri unduly derail their bid to become a European force. Leonardo Jardim, who has left Sporting Lisbon at the end of the Portuguese season, is expected to take his place.

Impressive...PSG are champions again

Deep-pocketed benefactor

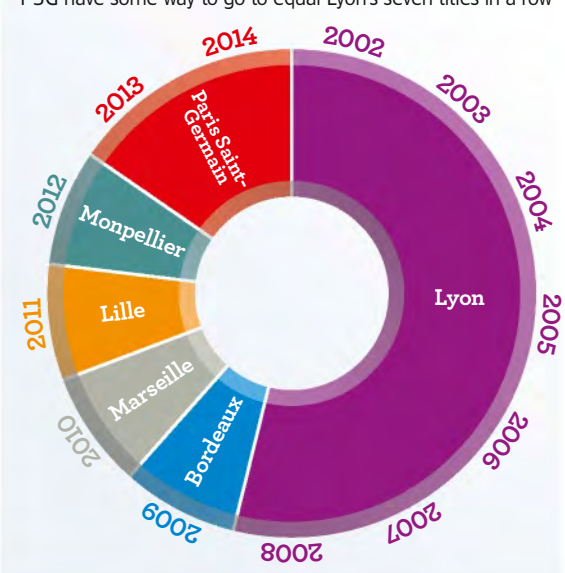
It is just possible that another deep-pocketed benefactor could come along with a yen for a French flutter, and maybe Marseille could be an interesting proposition, given the club's pedigree and enormous fanbase within France.

But, as usual, it would appear they have some work to do proving they have their house in order before anyone looks seriously at a club that has traditionally been embroiled in so much scandal. With sporting director Jose Anigo just about managing to keep the footballing ship afloat following the dismissal of Elie Baup in December, Marseille announced Marcelo Bielsa, the Argentinian former boss of Athletic Bilbao, as their coach for the next two seasons.

The club's sixth place finish meant there will be no European football at the Velodrome next season, but Bielsa has been called "the best manager in the world" by none other than Pep

CAN PSG MATCH LYON DOMESTICALLY?

PSG have some way to go to equal Lyon's seven titles in a row



Guardiola, so maybe hope springs eternal for all those OM fans who've had to gaze despairingly at bitter rivals PSG's tail lights these last three years.

Lille will, however, be battling it out in the preliminary round of the Champions League next season after finishing third under Rene Girard, who won the title with Montpellier two years ago. Special mention in dispatches, for the club's

> "I want to be part of this project over the long term – it's the most ambitious project in European football. Together we will dream bigger"
>
> Laurent Blanc on signing a new two-year contract to coach Paris Saint-Germain

Nigerian goalkeeper Vincent Enyeama, who performed heroics as his side conceded just 26 league goals all season. And talking of keepers, France raised a collective glass to Mickael Landreau of Bastia. The 35-year-old retired from football after making a record 618 Ligue 1 appearances and his final adventure – and does it get any better than this? – will be as a member of France's World Cup squad in Brazil.

France's two Europa League qualifiers were Saint-Etienne and Lyon, whose boss Remi Garde opted not to sign another contract, citing family reasons, having also led the team to the Final of the League Cup, where they went down 2-1 to PSG. Not bad for a club operating on a self-imposed, heavily restricted budget.

The French Cup, meanwhile, went to unfancied Guingamp, who beat Rennes 2-0 – and qualified for the Europa League – in a people's Final that showed that there is more to French football life than simply following the big boys.

Down at the bottom of the table it was heartbreak for Sochaux. After a disastrous start to their campaign, where they conceded 53 goals in their first 23 games, the men in yellow conceded just 17 in their last 15 matches, only to go down alongside Valenciennes and Ajaccio on the last day of the season when they lost 3-0 to Evian. A win would have saved them. The three sides coming up from Ligue 2 next season are Metz, Lens and Caen. WS

COACH OF THE SEASON
JOCELYN GOURVENNEC
(Guingamp, *above*)
The former Marseille midfielder took over at Guingamp when the club was in the French third division and he not only kept them in Ligue 1, he also won the French Cup for good measure.

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
ZLATAN IBRAHIMOVIC
(Paris Saint-Germain)
When a verb derived from a striker's surname, and meaning "to utterly dominate", enters common parlance there can surely only be one player of the season in France.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
VINCENT ABOUBAKAR (Lorient)
After three undistinguished seasons with Valenciennes, he exploded in some style in his first campaign at Lorient, with 16 goals making him the second-top scorer in Ligue 1.

Di Maria is the Real star

Jonathan Wilson looks at the Argentinian midfielder's telling influence for both club and country

Attacking threat...Di Maria takes the ball past Atletico Madrid's Raul Garcia during his match-winning performance in the Champions League Final

After all the debate about the health of *tiki-taka*, all the years when it seemed ideological battles were being played out in Champions League Finals, there was something almost comforting about the climax to this year's competition. It was an almost old-fashioned occasion: one very good team packed with stars facing another very good team whose methods were based on trying to prevent those stars from playing.

Real Madrid versus Atletico Madrid was a game that looked as though it might be decided by a goalkeeping error; in the end it was settled by a set-play that triggered a physical and emotional collapse in the side that had conceded, exhausted after a long season by having victory snatched from them at the last.

This is how Finals used to be before the Pep Guardiola years and, unless he achieves something remarkable at Bayern Munich, it's probably how Finals will be for the next few years.

> "It's a dream I've had since I was a child"
> Angel Di Maria on winning the Champions League

It's easy to forget that Guardiola's Barcelona were an extreme, both in terms of talent and in how they played. The extreme possession style of *tiki-taka* bred an extreme anti-possession style in response.

Whereas once teams – such as Manchester United in the Champions League Finals of 2009 and 2011 – were intimidated by *tiki-taka*, and unnerved by the fact that, used to dominating the ball, they were registering only 30 per cent possession, it's now accepted that games can be won with startlingly low possession stats. Major teams are happy to sit back and let their opponents have the ball in areas in which they are unlikely to create chances. It was that recognition that led to both Bayern's victory over Barcelona in

the 2013 semi-finals and Real Madrid's over Bayern this year.

Real are a side who naturally prefer to have the ball. They play with a swagger that is part of the club's identity. Yet in their 4-0 win in the second leg of the semi-final against Bayern in April, they had just 31 per cent of the ball – a victory for Carlo Ancelotti's pragmatism, his recognition that there's no point taking on a side like Bayern in open combat.

In the Final, Real switched from a reactive approach to their more natural proactive style, and returned to 4-3-3.

It's a shape that allows Cristiano Ronaldo and Gareth Bale to rampage down the flanks, with Karim Benzema as a mobile front man, encouraging fluidity among the front three. While Ronaldo's tendency to drift infield is balanced by the overlapping of Marcelo or Fabio Coentrao from left-back, it is when the midfield three click that Real really find their form.

Critical role

Angel Di Maria's role is critical in all this. His is an unusual role in the modern game, but it's one he fulfils for both Real and Argentina. With Xabi Alonso (or, in the Champions League Final, Sami Khedira, who came in for the suspended Alonso) sitting deep in central midfield, protecting the back four and looking to initiate attacks with his long-range passing ability, and Luka Modric operating to his right as a deep-lying playmaker, there is a need for a player to link the midfield to a fluid forward line that tends to stay high.

While Di Maria has the energy to perform that linking role, shuttling forward from midfield, more importantly, he also has the tactical intelligence. He was named man of the match in the Final and also had an excellent game in the second leg of the semi-final.

There's probably no better player in the world at the moment at knowing when to carry the ball forwards, when to hold his position and when to attempt a long forward pass. In that semi-final, having taken the free-kick that led to Sergio Ramos' second goal, he also had a key part in the third: his pass to release Benzema, who laid in Bale to set up Ronaldo, could not have been shaped or weighted better. There were two other crosses late on that created chances for Ronaldo and Raphael Varane. Not only that, but the link-up between Phillip Lahm and Arjen Robben, a key part of Bayern's attacking game, was significantly impaired by Di Maria's defensive excellence.

Defensive excellence...Di Maria helped nullify the attacking threat of Bayern down the right flank in the semi-finals

Similarly, in the second *clasico* of the season, although Real lost 4-3, Di Maria dominated Xavi, neutering him as a creative force and providing the crosses that led to Real's first and second goals, as well as creating two fine chances that were wasted by Benzema.

Di Maria's relative lack of goals – just four in 34 league games this season – and the functional nature of much of his play means he will never get the same sort of recognition as Ronaldo, Bale or Modric. But he is vital to Real, as he proved again in the Final, picking up the ball on halfway and making the most of the space Atletico had left in front of him to surge forward and unleash the shot that led to Thibaut Courtois parrying the ball into the path of Bale.

Winner...a delighted Di Maria holds aloft the Champions League trophy

Just as vital

Di Maria is just as vital to Argentina, who have a similarly fluid front three that likes to remain high up the pitch and a similar shape in midfield, even if the trio of Di Maria, Javier Mascherano and Fernando Gago (if fit) is rather more combative that the Real three. Again, there is a danger that the front half and back half of the team could become too distant. Di Maria performs the bridging role although, with three men in front of him, his job is necessarily slightly more defensive. He is, essentially, like the up-and-down wingers who became such a feature of the 4-4-2 set-up – but doing it in a 4-3-3.

After an excellent season, Di Maria deserved his recognition in the Final; his success also a triumph for Ancelotti and his willingness to build a system from the parts he has available, rather than prioritising the philosophy. WS

Club...Di Maria is the crucial midfield link to Real's attacking trio

Country...Di Maria has another stellar front three ahead of him for Argentina

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WORLD CUP STARS OF 2014

WORLD CUP STARS

Every player from every team. WHO'S IN, WHO'S OUT?

CONTENTS

54 Algeria
55 Argentina
56 Australia
57 Belgium
58 Bosnia-H
59 Brazil
60 Cameroon
Chile
62 Colombia
63 Costa Rica
64 Croatia
65 Ecuador
66 England
67 France
68 Germany
69 Ghana
70 Greece
71 Holland
72 Honduras
Iran
74 Italy
75 Ivory Coast
76 Japan
77 Mexico
78 Nigeria
79 Portugal
80 Russia
81 South Korea
82 Spain
83 Switzerland
84 Uruguay
86 USA

Algeria

Nabil Bentaleb

Q&A

You nearly gave up the game a few years ago, didn't you...
It was a really tough time for me. I had two choices: either I could give up and not fight for what I wanted, or try to show them they were wrong. Lille kicked me out saying I was too small. I sent my CV out and went on trial for a few clubs. I didn't feel it was all over. After I tried everything I knew my future was not going to be in France.

High ball...Bentaleb wins a header during a warm-up game against Romania

You went on trial at Tottenham and Tim Sherwood [then youth coach] signed you within a fortnight...
At the club I had good people who helped me overcome my homesickness. Once you have dreams you do everything to achieve them.

You played at youth level for France, but you opted to play for Algeria – the birthplace of both your parents. Why was that?
I asked many people around me, like coaches and family, and they told me the same thing: "You have to take the decision that your heart tells you." My heart was telling me Algeria. England would have been a possibility, but my choice is made.

How was your debut against Slovenia?
It was amazing. I got a very warm welcome from the public the moment I arrived. On top of that we won and I think the entire team played very well. We played as a team and being in the starting XI made me feel particularly warm at heart. I think I played well enough, even though I could have scored twice.

> "Once you have dreams you do everything to achieve them"

You could be facing club team-mates Mousa Dembele, Nacer Chadli and Jan Vertonghen when you play Belgium. How do you feel about that?
They [the Belgians] see us as the outsiders, which is better for us because we can surprise them. You have to prepare well in order to do well during the tournament. It will be really hard. But we will see how it goes. I am a person with clear objectives and I will do all I can to achieve them.

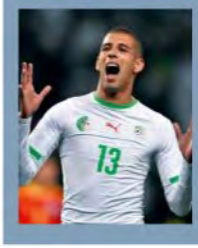
Do you pinch yourself about what has happened over the last six months? It must be like a dream come true.
Yes, you could say that. A few months ago I wouldn't even imagine being where I am now. But William Gallas said to me things can change in football very quickly, both ways. You can climb very fast but you can also drop soon after and it is up to you which path you take. The most important thing is to continue to work hard.

What's your feeling about Algeria's future?
It's a young team. Many young players joined it recently like myself and others. Everyone has been very caring with us and helped us fit in. I believe it's a team that can become great one day.

And what about your own future?
I am surrounded by people who tell me that I need to keep putting in the hard work, but I know that myself, too. That is the only way to succeed.

Interview by Gerry Cox

The SQUAD



GOALKEEPERS
Rais M'bolhi (CSKA Sofia, Bul), **Cedric Si Mohamed** (CS Constantine), **Mohamed Zemmamouche** (USM Alger)

DEFENDERS
Essaid Belkalem (Granada, Spa), **Madjid Bougherra** (Lekhwiya, Qat), **Liassine Cadamuro** (Real Sociedad, Spa), **Faouzi Ghoulam** (Napoli, Ita), **Rafik Halliche** (Academica, Por, *top*), **Aissa Mandi** (Reims, Fra), **Carl Medjani** (Monaco, Fra), **Djamel Mesbah** (Parma, Ita), **Mehdi Mostefa** (AC Ajaccio, Fra)

MIDFIELDERS
Nabil Bentaleb (Tottenham, Eng), **Yacine Brahimi** (Grenada, Spa), **Abdelmoumene Djabou** (Club Africain, Tun), **Sofiane Feghouli** (Valencia, Spa), **Medhi Lacen** (Getafe, Spa), **Riyad Mahrez** (Leicester City, Eng), **Saphir Taider** (Internazionale, Ita, *middle*), **Hassan Yebda** (Udinese, Ita)

FORWARDS
Nabil Ghilas (Porto, Por), **Islam Slimani** (Sporting Lisbon, Por, *bottom*), **Hilal Soudani** (Dinamo Zagreb, Cro)

New boy Mahrez included

Bastia midfielder Ryad Boudebouz, who has not played since the 2013 African Nations Cup, missed the cut after being named in Vahid Halilhodzic's 30-man provisional squad. Ryad Mahrez, who only made his international debut in May, against Armenia, was included.

Brazil-bound...winger Mahrez

Argentina

Lionel Messi

Q&A

Who are going to be your biggest rivals at this World Cup?
I think Brazil, Germany and Spain are going to be the favourites. And then there's always a surprise team that appears.

What do you think about all these blank cheques that some clubs would be willing to pay to sign you?
My intention has always been to stay in Barcelona. Thank you, if it is true what has been said about Paris Saint-Germain and other clubs that are interested. It's an honour to read about these things, but my life is in Barcelona.

> "To win the World Cup would be a dream for me, for my team-mates and for the country"

Would you swap all your individual world player awards to win the World Cup with Argentina?
I've been lucky to win every award there is for individuals and clubs. To win the World Cup would be a dream for me, for my team-mates and for the whole country.

You recently became a father for the first time. How has that changed you?
Coming home after a game or a training session and seeing my son laughing and smiling at me – that's the greatest happiness you can imagine.

It's not going to be easy growing up as the son of Lionel Messi. How are you preparing him for the future?
His education and upbringing will have nothing to do with me being Lionel Messi. We will just try to do for him what we believe is best.

What about the presence of Portugal at the World Cup and the rivalry between Cristiano Ronaldo and you? Do you think it has made you better players?
It is very good that we are playing for the best teams in the world. I don't known if Cristiano Ronaldo is playing at his best, but he is always there scoring goals in every game and being an important figure in his national side. It takes many years to reach your best, so even if he is at his best, or a little lower, it makes almost no difference.

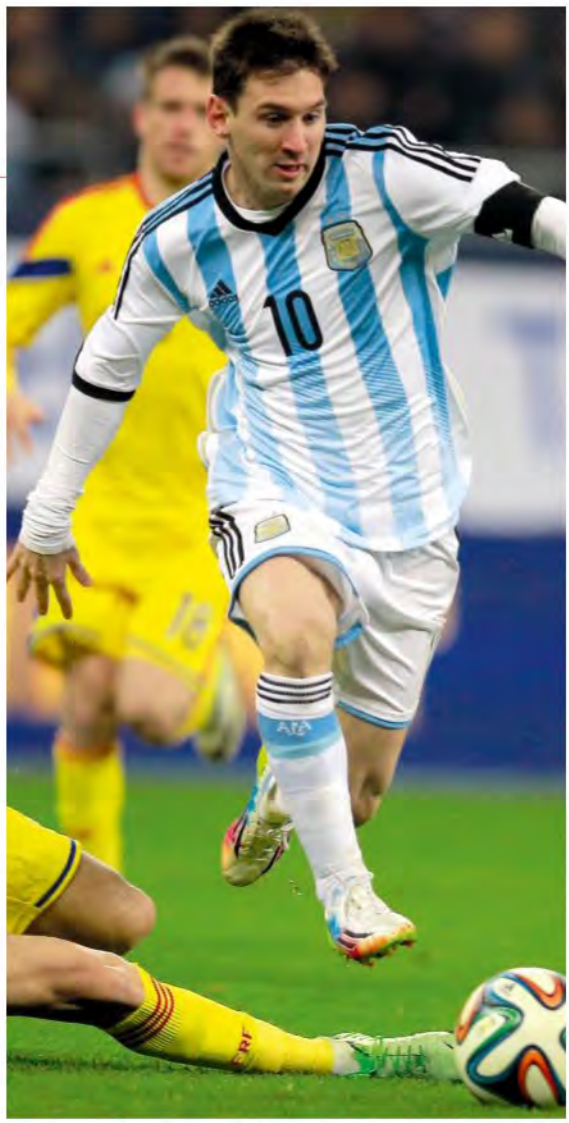
Have you been surprised by the success of Atletico Madrid this season?
Atletico are a very competitive team. Many people thought that they would not carry on from last season but they have fought for everything. "*El Cholo*" [coach Diego Simeone] is doing a great job. Arda [Turan] is a player who knows how to control the tempo of games.

What do you think of today's increasingly crowded fixture list? For the players, there's a greater risk that you could get injured...
It is true that there are more and more games, trips and competitions, but this is what happens when you are successful. We can not do anything about it. We like to play and be competitive in all the competitions in which we participate.

How do you explain Barcelona's season?
It wasn't my best year. I would have liked it to end another way, but it was to do with the whole group, not just on an individual level, that we all suffered the dip in form. After a difficult year we were still in a position to win the [Spanish league] title but we weren't able to do that. On a personal level it wasn't easy either, with injuries and other things outside football, but this is how it ended and we have to look ahead.

How easy is it to change into national team mode?
Now that I'm with the national team I have to change the chip. It used to happen to me the other way around, things didn't go well with the national side but went well with Barcelona. I hope now it's the other way round.

Interview by Sid Lowe/ESM



Main man...Messi leads an Argentina side packed with attacking talent

The SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
Mariano Andujar (Catania, Ita), **Agustin Orion** (Boca Juniors), **Sergio Romero** (Monaco, Fra)

DEFENDERS
Jose-Maria Basanta (Monterrey, Mex), **Hugo Campagnaro** (Inter, Ita), **Martin Demichelis** (Man City, Eng), **Federico Fernandez** (Napoli, Ita), **Ezequiel Garay** (Benfica, Por), **Marcos Rojo** (Sporting, Por), **Pablo Zabaleta** (Man City, Eng)

MIDFIELDERS
Ricardo Alvarez (Inter, Ita), **Lucas Biglia** (Lazio, Ita), **Angel Di Maria** (Real Madrid, Spa), **Augusto Fernandez** (Celta Vigo, Spa), **Fernando Gago** (Boca), **Javier Mascherano** (Barcelona, Spa), **Enzo Perez** (Benfica, Por), **Maxi Rodriguez** (Newell's Old Boys)

FORWARDS
Sergio Aguero (Man City, Eng), **Gonzalo Higuain** (Napoli, Ita), **Ezequiel Lavezzi** (PSG, Fra), **Lionel Messi** (Barcelona, Spa), **Rodrigo Palacio** (Inter, Ita)

Gago worth a gamble

Playmaker Fernando Gago (*right*) made the final 23 despite fitness concerns over a knee injury.

Valencia midfielder Ever Banega, who had returned home on loan to Newell's Old Boys in an attempt to regain form and fitness, was one of three players trimmed from Alejandro Sabella's provisional squad. Nicolas Otamendi, and Jose Sosa were the others to miss out.

Martin Demichelis made the squad despite not featuring for Argentina since November 2011.

Australia

Ryan McGowan

Q&A

You've only won eight caps but you are almost a veteran in this Australia squad. Is there a different feel to the camp under Ange Postecoglou?
A little bit. When a new man comes in, things do change; but the boss has brought a freshness to the scene and I think the [older] players he has kept on have bought into that as well. The play has evolved in my two years as part of the set-up. I've not had too much game time for Australia, but I can help the younger boys with one or two things that other people don't know – regarding what to do, and what not to do, in camp, for example.

What do you think of Australia's chances in Brazil?
Well, I think we're a decent group of players who have played at a good level. We need to show respect of course, but the best way to do that is to go out there and be hard to beat, and be in their face – no one likes that. We want teams we play against to say that we were difficult. We want to show everything that is Australian – that is what is expected. But we also want to show we can pass the ball, keep the ball in tight areas, that we can play a little bit. I think that's what we are trying to prove. If teams underestimate us, or look at the other matches as their big games, then we have to make sure we don't miss our opportunity to cause a surprise.

There is a stereotype of Australia playing a long-ball game. Will people be surprised by the way you play?
The boss has his way of playing and he is dead set on that. We have bought into it. I think we will surprise a few people. There will be difficult patches in games when we are up against it, but there will also be periods when we frustrate them. The way we see it, the other teams will take points off each other; I don't expect that a team in our group will win all three games, so if you get four points, you can probably sneak through. We see that we have a chance of winning any one of the three games, which will give us a chance. In the World Cup there is always one team in the group that runs away with it – Germany, for example, in 2010 – but not this time, and we are almost being disregarded.

You can play at right-back if needed but, with Lucas Neill omitted from the squad, are you hopeful of gaining a place in central defence?
I think that's the one position that is really up for grabs. [Ivan] Franjic has done very well at right-back, but in the centre there are a few options. Curtis Good missed out through injury and the rest of us are an even chance, with no one really stamping their authority on the position. So if I get an opportunity, I have to impress and make it difficult for Ange to leave me out.

> "We want to show we can pass, keep the ball in tight areas; that we can play a little bit"

Where did you watch the previous World Cups?
Just in Australia. I was overseas at club level, so I was on holiday back in Adelaide. The first one – in 2006 – I was at a mate's house because I was too young to go out into the city. The last one I went to watch in the city on the big screens. It's exciting to be actually part of it this time.

As a South Australian, were you particularly proud of John Aloisi scoring at the 2006 World Cup?
Yes, because we haven't had too many South Australians perform at that level. We had the Vidmars [Aurelio and Tony] and John, and that's about it. This time there is me and James Troisi, so that's a feather in our caps, having been born and raised in Adelaide. I'm sure if I play at a World Cup, that would make a lot of people in Adelaide happy. It's great to show the people that if you work hard and follow your dreams you can make it. A lot of people on the eastern side of the country bad-mouth Adelaide, but it goes to show you don't have to come from the bigger cities to find success, and that there is a lot of talent in Adelaide.

Interview by Simon Hill

Getting ready... McGowan during a warm-up game against South Africa

The SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
Eugene Galekovic (Adelaide United), **Mitchell Langerak** (Borussia Dortmund, Ger), **Mat Ryan** (Club Brugge, Blg)

DEFENDERS
Jason Davidson (Heracles, Hol), **Ivan Franjic** (Brisbane Roar), **Ryan McGowan** (Shandong Luneng, Chn), **Matthew Spiranovic** (Western Sydney Wanderers), **Alex Wilkinson** (Jeonbuk Motors, SKo), **Bailey Wright** (Preston North End, Eng)

MIDFIELDERS
Oliver Bozanic (Lucerne, Swi), **Mark Bresciano** (Al Gharafa, Qat), **James Holland** (Austria Vienna, Aut, *top*), **Mile Jedinak** (Crystal Palace, Eng), **Massimo Luongo** (Swindon, Eng, *middle*) **Matt McKay** (Brisbane Roar), **Mark Milligan** (Melbourne Victory), **James Troisi** (Atalanta, Ita), **Dario Vidosic** (Sion, Swi)

FORWARDS
Tim Cahill (New York Red Bulls. USA), **Ben Halloran** (Fort Dusseldorf, Ger, *bottom*), **Matthew Leckie** (FSV Frankfurt, Ger), **Tommy Oar** (Utrecht, Hol), **Adam Taggart** (Newcastle Jets)

Old guard are gone

Ange Postecoglou takes an inexperienced squad with him to Brazil following the international retirements of Mark Schwarzer, Brett Emerton, Brett Holman and Harry Kewell – and the omission of Luke Wilkshere and former captain Lucas Neill. Josh Kennedy, who scored the goal that sealed qualification, misses out though injury, as does Tom Rogic.

"Every step of the selection process has been difficult," said Postecoglou. "We have had to weigh up form, fitness and balance in coming up with the 23 players who will represent us at the 2014 World Cup."

Kennedy...missing out through injury

Belgium

Romelu Lukaku

Which other strikers do you most admire and look up to?
If you take the pure number nines, the guys like Cavani, Ibrahimovic, Van Persie, Suarez and Lewandowski. I hope to be considered in that company in a couple of years time. I analyse the way they play. I watch their runs. I admire Ibrahimovic's presence; the ball control and left-footed shooting of Van Persie; the right foot of Cavani; Lewandowski's movement; and the way Suarez dribbles. He's so unpredictable. In my time in the Premier League I've never seen someone do what he does.

How would you describe your season in England with Everton?
I've always said that, by the age of 21, I wanted to be thought of as a top attacker. I'm on the right road. I'm more intelligent, more effective in my forward play, my passing and my work in one-on-ones. I have to be dominant for longer periods in a match. Sometimes you'll see me for 60 minutes or, alternatively, I'll be quiet until the last half hour, taking advantage of defenders' fatigue. I'd like to be fully involved from the first to the 90th minute.

What type of striker are you?
I'm a goalscorer. I'm always looking to be facing the goal. I'm not the pivot type. If I played like that, I'd lose 80 per cent of my ability, which for the most part is based on speed and looking to go deep.

What are your aims with Belgium?
My goal is to be a national-team regular at this very moment. To be a starter throughout the World Cup in Brazil. And it can't just end there, either. I'm looking to Euro 2016 and the World Cups of 2018 and 2022.

But coach Marc Wilmots used you mainly as a substitute in the qualifying campaign for Brazil...
Something was missing as far as I was concerned. It didn't turn out as I would have wanted.

> "I'm a goalscorer. I'm always looking to be facing the goal"

Threat...Lukaku goes for goal in the 2-2 draw with Ivory Coast in March

What are Belgium's ambitions at the World Cup?
Reaching the second round is a must, an obligation. There's no point hiding or being frightened. We've attackers who have wreaked havoc in England. Just who should we be afraid of?

Some people claim it is fanciful to talk of a semi-final appearance...
We have to be aware of the potential we have. We must show that sporting arrogance; the sort of attitude we had with the youngsters at Anderlecht. Before every tournament we'd say to ourselves we'd win easily and, in the end, we did. The Dutch have this sort of arrogance and that's why they are successful. When you compare ourselves with them, there's no need for us to be envious. If we play them, we must get into them, beat them up.

Are you preparing to play for Chelsea next season?
Yes. I wouldn't sign a five-year contract with them otherwise.

Interview by Foot/Sport (ESM)

The SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
Sammy Bossut (Zulte Waregem), **Thibaut Courtois** (Chelsea, Eng), **Simon Mignolet** (Liverpool, Eng)

DEFENDERS
Toby Alderweireld (Atletico Madrid, Spa), **Laurent Ciman** (Standard Liege), **Vincent Kompany** (Manchester City, Eng), **Nicolas Lombaerts** (Zenit, Rus), **Daniel Van Buyten** (Bayern Munich, Ger), **Anthony Vanden Borre** (Anderlecht), **Thomas Vermaelen** (Arsenal, Eng), **Jan Vertonghen** (Tottenham Hotspur, Eng)

MIDFIELDERS
Nacer Chadli (Tottenham Hotspur, Eng), **Kevin De Bruyne** (Wolfsburg, Ger), **Steven Defour** (Porto, Por), **Mousa Dembele** (Tottenham Hotspur, Eng), **Marouane Fellaini** (Manchester United, Eng), **Eden Hazard** (Chelsea, Eng), **Adnan Januzaj** (Manchester United, Eng), **Kevin Mirallas** (Everton, Eng), **Axel Witsel** (Zenit, Rus)

FORWARDS
Romelu Lukaku (Chelsea, Eng), **Dries Mertens** (Napoli, Ita), **Divock Origi** (Lille, Fra, *left*)

Star of the future?

Coach Marc Wilmots has moved to determine the international future of Adnan Januzaj (*right*) by naming the 19-year-old in his party for Brazil. However, until the winger makes a competitive appearance for the "*Diables Rouges*" he remains eligible for Albania, Turkey and Serbia.

Uncapped striker Divock Origi, who is also 19 and has just one under-21 appearance to his name, was preferred to Michy Batshuayi for the place freed up by Christian Benteke's injury.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

Asmir Begovic

Q&A

This is Bosnia's first World Cup. Does that make the players feel special?
In a way we do. Of course, we are professionals and football is our job, but at the end of the day you play because of the fans. I love football and I live for such occasions as this; to play on the big stage, with the best teams in the world, at the World Cup. It can't get better than that.

You've been part of the team since 2010, and in that time you narrowly missed out on two major finals after losing to Portugal in the play-offs. What was different this time?
I would say that we have matured. The spine of this team is almost the same as the one in the Euro 2012 qualifiers, but we are two years older, more mature and have much more experience. We marched through the qualifiers with style. Even though Greece was breathing down our neck, we dominated the group. We felt more secure than before and I think that from now on it will be even easier because we have got rid of the burden on our shoulders. We have achieved our goal and the pressure is less than before – and that can only be an advantage.

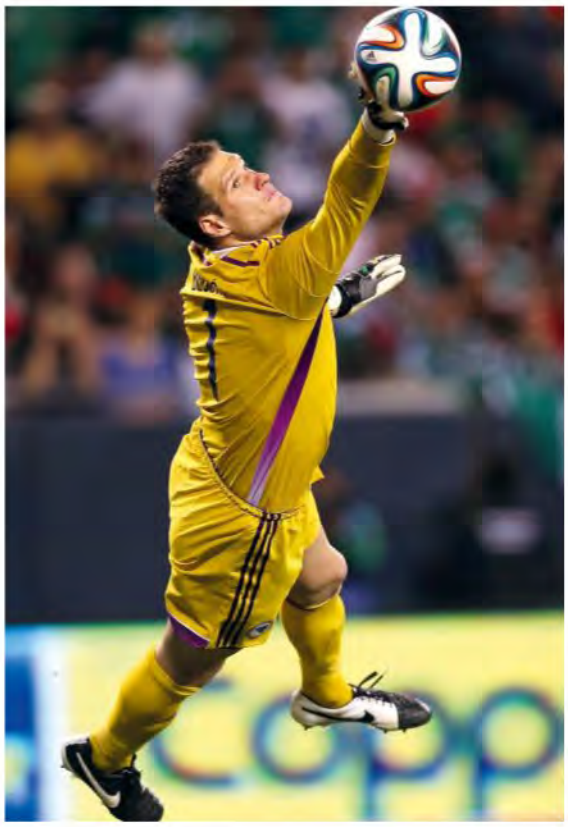
Was it hard for you to choose Bosnia over Canada?
No, not at all. My family escaped the war in the 1990s and we ended up in Canada via Germany. I played for Canada in youth teams, but the moment I received a call-up from Bosnia-Herzegovina I knew what I would do. And it is similar with all the other guys. It's not you that decides, you just follow your heart.

Although Bosnia scored 30 goals in the qualifiers, some say that the defence is a weak link...
Not if you ask me! Yes, obviously, our main strength is our attacking power and we are trying to impose our attacking style against all opponents, but we've shown that we know how to defend. For example, in Pireaus we managed to hold Greece to a goalless draw. We looked solid in all our other matches and I think we have enough to be optimistic.

Flying high... Begovic is now a transfer target for Real Madrid

How do you view your group?
In my opinion, the group could not be any better for us. Not in terms of quality. I am not trying to say it is going to be easy; on the contrary. But, we have always dreamed of playing the best, playing at the World Cup, and now we have got the chance to play teams like Argentina at the Maracana. If you love this game you have to enjoy such occasions and I know I will. We have a very good team that has been together for years and we've proved that we can play anyone in the world. It will be difficult, but I would be more than satisfied if we reach the knockout stage.

> "We will play to make our people happy"



The expectations back home are huge. Can you cope with that?
In a way it is normal and logical that people expect big things from us. And not just from us, from anyone that plays in the World Cup. In football, anything is possible. We have to think positive, as our fans do. Why can't we be successful? As Croatia, for example, did in 1998. They are a good example to follow and they were in a similar situation as we are today. What we want is to establish ourselves as regulars in the major tournaments and one of the ways to do that is to perform well in our first World Cup.

Do you agree with your captain, Emir Spahic, that the recent floods which devastated Bosnia will be yet another reason to give your best and bring some joy to the people?
Definitely. Our nation has been through some terrible things in the last 20 years, including the war that took more than 100,000 lives. In the last couple of years we have created a special bond with our fans and we have one of the best supports in the world, with fans following us to every corner of this planet. The country is in a bad shape, people are struggling to make ends meet, and football and our success are their only joy. It is similar now with the floods. We visited some of the affected areas and it looked like a war zone. We are aware that we can hardly help them have a better life, but at least we can bring some joy to them. We will play to make our people happy – and we are proud of that.

Interview by Sasa Ibrulj

The SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
Asmir Avdukic (Borac Banja Luka), **Asmir Begovic** (Stoke City, Eng), **Jasmin Fejzic** (Aalen, Ger)

DEFENDERS
Ermin Bicakcic (Braunschweig, Ger), **Muhamed Besic** (Ferencvaros, Hun), **Sead Kolasinac** (Schalke, Ger), **Emir Spahic** (Bayer Leverkusen, Ger), **Toni Sunjic** (Zorya Luhansk, Ukr), **Ognjen Vranjes** (Elazigspor, Tur)

MIDFIELDERS
Anel Hadzic (Sturm Graz, Aut), **Izet Hajrovic** (Galatasaray, Tur), **Senijad Ibricic** (Erciyespor, Tur), **Senad Lulis** (Lazio, Ita), **Haris Medunjanin** (Gaziantepspor, Tur), **Zvjezdan Misimovic** (Guizhou Renhe, Chn), **Mensur Mujdza** (Freiburg, Ger), **Miralem Pjanic** (Roma, Ita), **Sejad Salihovic** (Hoffenheim, Ger), **Tino-Sven Susic** (Hajduk Split, Cro), **Avdija Vrsajevic** (Hajduk Split, Cro)

FORWARDS
Edin Dzeko (Man City, Eng), **Vedad Ibisevic** (Stuttgart, Ger), **Edin Visca** (Istanbul BB, Tur)

Odd one out

Genk defender Ervin Zukanovic (*right*) was the unlucky one of coach Safet Susic's original 24-man squad, missing out as Mensur Mujdza was included despite injury fears. Keeper Asmir Avdukic is the only home-based player in a squad that includes the coach's nephew, Tino-Sven Susic.

Brazil

Jo

You were very young when you left Brazil for CSKA Moscow. What was it like living so far from your family?
I was only 17, about to turn 18. Living by yourself in a cold climate is difficult and it's hard to adapt to the local culture. You end up shutting yourself away in your own little world. There are some players who manage to fit in, but I spent most of my time at home. All I'd ever do was go to the shopping mall once in a while!

You've had some problems with discipline in the past, both at Everton and when you were back in Brazil with Internacional. Do you regret those incidents and feel you could have done things better?
It's not that I could have done things better, but I regret my attitude on a couple of occasions. At Everton they gave me two days off for Christmas and I ended up staying in Brazil for four days. But I was so young. I'm 27 now and I wouldn't make the same mistakes again. If I'd been a bit more sensible I could still be playing in Europe today.

Dangerous...Jo celebrates scoring against Japan in the Confederations Cup

> "Scolari really wants to be world champion again. He isn't content with the one title"

There do seem to be problems for quite a few Brazilian players who go to Europe, such as Adriano, Ronaldinho and others...
Because you spend a lot of time alone, you end up with a lot of thoughts going round in your head. With Adriano, for example, the death of his father contributed to the problems he had at Internazionale. That's why it's important to have family around, to tell you where you're going wrong and help you.

What changed for you when you moved to Atletico Mineiro in 2012?
When I arrived the president said "the Jo that I know, that Manchester City paid so much money for, I didn't see at Inter. But you haven't forgotten how to play football. I believe in you, the coach believes in you and the fans believe in you." When people have faith in you, it helps a lot.

Your transformation has been amazing: from being released by Internacional just two years ago to playing for Brazil at the World Cup...
Definitely. It's all about confidence. My life has changed enormously in the last couple of years.

After a number of years in which the fans and the national team seemed to have grown apart, the supporters appear to be right behind you again...
Brazilian fans demand a lot, and we hadn't been playing well under Mano Menezes. Teams weren't scared of us. When "Felipao" [national coach Luiz Felipe Scolari] took the job he said we had to make other teams respect us again. We played very well at the Confederations Cup and formed a bond with the fans. Teams are scared of us again and people say we're favourites for the World Cup.

Will the passion of the Brazilian fans, who aren't known for their patience, make things difficult by putting extra pressure on the team?
For sure, but it all depends on how we play. We're playing at home and they're going to want us to really go for it. But we have to keep our heads and play at the right pace.

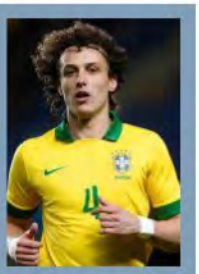
What is it like working with Felipao? How is the mood in the squad?
He lets us be ourselves. He's not the hard man that I thought he was. He gives the impression that he's very strict but it's not like that. Of course, he tells us how he wants us to play, but he lets us relax too.

What is he like in the dressing room?
That's when he's toughest. He expects a lot. He gives us instructions, and if he has to shout, he will. But it's always constructive criticism, he doesn't humiliate or insult anyone. And even in a short period of time he manages to motivate us. He really wants to be world champion again. He isn't content with the one title that he has.

Are you confident about Brazil's chances of winning the tournament?
Yes, because there's a real togetherness in the squad. We've got a good team. And there are a lot of players who have never played in a World Cup, so you can imagine the level of excitement in the camp.

Interview by James Young

The SQUAD



GOALKEEPERS
Julio Cesar (QPR, Eng), **Jefferson** (Botafogo), **Victor** (Atletico Mineiro)

DEFENDERS
Dani Alves (Barcelona, Spa), **Dante** (Bayern Munich, Ger), **Henrique** (Napoli, Ita), **David Luiz** (Chelsea, Eng, *top*), **Maicon** (Roma, Ita, *middle*), **Marcelo** (Real Madrid, Spa), **Maxwell** (Paris Saint-Germain, Fra), **Thiago Silva** (Paris Saint-Germain, Fra)

MIDFIELDERS
Bernard (Shakhtar Donetsk, Ukr), **Fernandinho** (Man City, Eng), **Luiz Gustavo** (Wolfsburg, Ger), **Hernanes** (Internazionale, Ita), **Oscar** (Chelsea, Eng), **Paulinho** (Tottenham H, Eng), **Ramires** (Chelsea, Eng), **Willian** (Chelsea, Eng)

FORWARDS
Fred (Fluminense), **Hulk** (Zenit, Rus), **Jo** (Atletico Mineiro), **Neymar** (Barcelona, Spa, *bottom*)

Big names miss out

Out...Kaka failed to make the cut

There will be no last grand finale for Kaka or Robinho as they were left out of the squad. Of those included, 17 were involved in last year's Confederations Cup, but only Julio Cesar, Dani Alves, Maicon and Ramires played at the 2010 World Cup. Fred was Ronaldo's understudy in 2006.

Roma's 32-year-old right-back Maicon was a surprise inclusion at the expense of the younger Rafinha of Bayern Munich.

Cameroon

Eric-Maxim Choupo-Moting

Q&A

What are the aims of the Cameroon side in Brazil?
If we get through the group phase intact it will be a fantastic result. It will all depend on our form on the day. Qualification is no easy task, but we certainly have the potential to play well in every game. Having to face tournament hosts and favourites Brazil will not be simple, but it remains to be seen how they deal with those pressures.

What about the expectations back in Cameroon?
We'll have a lot of pressure on us too. We have a responsibility to do something of note for our country. The Cameroon people are football crazy. Perhaps even more than in Germany. When you don't live up to expectations, the disappointment is very quick to be felt.

Is Samuel Eto'o a team-mate or a rival?
On the basis of the system we've been using lately [with Eto'o centre-forward and Choupo-Moting wide on the left], Eto'o and I are not direct competitors for the same place in the starting line-up.

You seem to have become much more disciplined this season...
During the course of this season, I've become much stronger in my defensive work. Although forwards aren't particularly keen on this part of the game, you can't avoid it. Sometimes it must seem as if I'm playing left-back.

Interview by James Cannon

The SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
Loic Feudjou (Coton Sport), **Charles Itandje** (Konyaspor, Tur), **Sammy Ndjock** (Fetihespor, Tur)

DEFENDERS
Benoit Assou-Ekotto (Tottenham Hotspur, Eng), **Henri Bedimo** (Lyon, Fra), **Aurelien Chedjou** (Galatasaray, Tur), **Cedric Djeugoue** (Coton Sport), **Nicolas N'koulou** (Marseille, Fra), **Dany Nounkeu** (Galatasaray, Tur), **Allan Nyom** (Udinese, Ita),

MIDFIELDERS
Eyong Enoh (Antalyaspor, Tur), **Jean Makoun** (Rennes, Fra), **Joel Matip** (Schalke, Ger), **Stephane Mbia** (Queens Park Rangers, Eng), **Landry Nguemo** (Bordeaux, Fra), **Edgar Salli** (Monaco, Fra), **Alex Song** (Barcelona, Spa)

FORWARDS
Vincent Aboubakar (Lorient, Fra), **Eric Choupo-Moting** (Mainz, Ger), **Samuel Eto'o** (Chelsea, Eng), **Benjamin Moukandjo** (Nancy, Fra), **Fabrice Olinga** (Malaga, Spa), **Pierre Webo** (Fenerbahce, Tur)

Vet stays home

Veteran striker Mohammadou Idrissou of Maccabi Haifi missed the cut, along with Olympiakos defender Gaeten Bong, Rennes defender Jean-Armel Kana-Biyik, Guingamp goalkeeper Ndy Assembe and Osasuna midfielder Cedric Loe.

Left out...Idrissou

Chile

Claudio Bravo

Q&A

Are you at all worried that potential defensive weaknesses could be exploited by your group opponents?
We don't have a lot of defensive height. That's the way it was during qualification and now we have to accept that risk again. We will have to use other resources to do well in the World Cup. But we've already played plenty of games with this formation and we can take on any opponent on equal terms.

Which of the group games is most important for Chile?
We're most focused on the game against Australia. If we don't win that one then things will get complicated for us, mainly bearing in mind the magnitude of the other two group rivals.

There has been speculation linking you with a summer move to Barcelona. What do you make of it all?
I would rather talk about the national team, that's what is important at the moment. It's where I am today. Tomorrow we'll deal with other subjects. My commitment at the moment is to be with my team-mates preparing to play in Brazil.

How has this team improved since the last World Cup?
We're terribly hungry to do well at this World Cup We have the experience of having participated in a World Cup to call upon. I believe that we were the youngest team in South Africa, but this team is more experienced, and when you get more experience, other experiences follow. We believe in the work we are doing. We will give respect to the opposition but we really believe in ourselves.

Interview by Esteban Coppola

The SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
Claudio Bravo (Real Sociedad, Spa), **Johnny Herrera** (Universidad de Chile), **Cristopher Toselli** (Universidad Catolica)

DEFENDERS
Gonzalo Jara (Nottingham Forest, Eng), **Gary Medel** (Cardiff City, Eng), **Eugenio Mena** (Santos, Bra), **Jose Rojas** (Universidad de Chile)

MIDFIELDERS
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FORWARDS
Fabian Orellana (Celta Vigo, Spa) **Esteban Paredes** (Colo Colo), **Mauricio Pinilla** (Cagliari, Ita), **Alexis Sanchez** (Barcelona, Spa), **Jorge Valdivia** (Palmeiras, Bra), **Eduardo Vargas** (Valencia, Spa)

Vidal's vote of confidence

Keyhole surgery...Vidal

Despite undergoing keyhole surgery for a problem with his right knee two weeks before the squad was announced, Juventus midfielder Arturo Vidal was picked for Brazil.

Matias Fernandez was not so lucky and was ruled out as he needs an operation on his right ankle.

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Colombia

Fredy Guarin

What is the mood like in the camp?
We are really excited to be at the World Cup. We know what we have to do and hopefully we can do well in Brazil.

How do you feel going into the tournament?
I feel really good and have played well this season, but the national team is a completely different situation. It's been a very long season but I feel in good condition and I'm very motivated to make history with Colombia.

What do you think of the other teams in your group?
They are going to be very difficult. Each team have their own strategies and they will all be fighting to qualify from an even group. They might not be the very strongest teams at this World Cup, but they certainly aren't the weakest either.

Will Colombia raise their level of performance in Brazil?
No. Personally, my level is always the same – the absolute maximum I can give – so that isn't going to change.

You have played for Colombia in several youth World Cups. Does that experience help?
Well, that doesn't just apply to me because a lot of other players have had a lot of experience of playing in youth World Cups. That's going to be very important, but players like Faryd Mondragon and Mario Yepes are also going to help us a lot as they have a wealth of experience.

Will suspension for Colombia's first game see you lose ground on the other players?
I'm just happy to be here and to feel part of this. I'm always going to make myself available and I'm motivated to confront whatever situation. I've talked with the coaching team and they told me not to worry about that, so no, I don't think I've lost ground.

After Colombia's impressive World Cup qualifying campaign, how easy is it going to be to carry that form into the finals?
We played really well during qualifying and are working hard to keep our level at the highest possible. We all know that mistakes don't go unpunished at a World Cup.

Interview by Carl Worswick

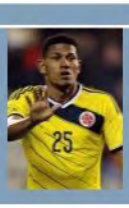
Key man...Guarin netted the winner in a 1-0 qualifying win over Venezuela

> We are working hard to keep our level at the highest possible. We all know that mistakes don't go unpunished at a World Cup

The SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
Faryd Mondragon (Deportivo Cali), **David Ospina** (Nice, Fra), **Camilo Vargas** (Santa Fe)

DEFENDERS
Santiago Arias (PSV, Hol), **Pablo Armero** (Napoli, Ita), **Eder Balanta** (River Plate, Arg), **Carlos Valdes** (Philadelphia Union, USA), **Mario Yepes** (Atalanta, Ita), **Cristian Zapata** (Milan, Ita), **Camilo Zuniga** (Napoli, Ita)



MIDFIELDERS
Abel Aguilar (Toulouse, Fra), **Juan Cuadrado** (Fiorentina, Ita), **Fredy Guarin** (Inter, Ita), **Victor Ibarbo** (Cagliari, Ita), **Alexander Mejia** (At Nacional, *left*), **Juan Fernando Quintero** (Porto, Por), **Aldo Ramirez** (Morelia, Mex), **James Rodriguez** (Monaco, Fra), **Carlos Sanchez** (Elche, Spa)

FORWARDS
Carlos Bacca (Sevilla, Spa), **Teofilo Gutierrez** (River Plate, Arg), **Jackson Martinez** (Porto, Por), **Adrian Ramos** (Hertha Berlin, Ger)

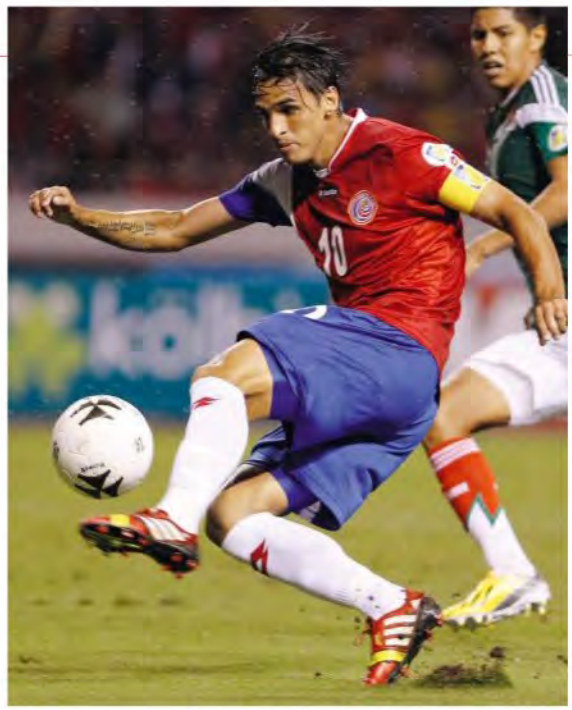
Falcao loss a big blow

Star striker Radamel Falcao (*far right*) of Monaco failed in his bid to be fit in time for Brazil after suffering a serious knee injury in January. Coach Jose Pekerman

(*far left*) had been willing to "wait for Falcao until the last day, the last minute", but the 28-year-old now joins injured Fluminense midfielder Edwin Valencia on the sidelines. Defender Aquivaldo Mosquera, and midfielders Elkin Soto and Macnelly Torres were all omitted after being named in Pekerman's provisional squad.

Costa Rica

Bryan Ruiz



Big expectations... Ruiz will be carrying the hopes of an entire nation in Brazil

You joined PSV on loan in January in preparation for the World Cup. Did you have other options?
There were others, but PSV had already wanted me before the season started. Then I said that it wasn't the right time, so when they came back during the winter break I appreciated it a lot. That was the right moment because I had to think about the World Cup. Besides, the Dutch league suits me since I had a great time with Twente winning the national title.

Why didn't you get too many chances at Fulham?
When Martin Jol was there I did get chances. When Rene Meulensteen took over he said he wanted to protect me since I wasn't playing well. I did understand that, but I was hoping to get another chance but that never came. Later Meulensteen said that I wasn't in his plans and it was up to me to stay or leave.

Is the World Cup a platform to show people that you can still be successful in the Premier League?
Yes, because I'm not done in England. One day I would like to play in Spain but not before returning to England. Whether that will be at Fulham, I don't know yet. I've still got one year left of my contract. People always remember the last things and forget that my first two seasons at Fulham were good. Now I've got a new chance to show them that I can make it in England.

How do you think Costa Rica are viewed as a team?
Obviously we are rated as the weak team in our group, although I'm sure our opponents will respect us. But we have a chance. Remember 1990, when we reached the second round and beat two European teams, Sweden and Scotland. And the climatic conditions give us a little advantage – at least compared to the European teams. In Costa Rica we are used to the humidity. We will have fewer problems to adapt.

It will be your first World Cup. But you should have been there eight years ago...
That was a huge disappointment. I made my debut against China in 2005, then scored my first goal at the CONCACAF Gold Cup and was really doing well. I was part of the provisional squad but was one of the three players who were dropped. Everybody in Costa Rica was surprised, including me. I've watched the World Cup at home on TV, supporting my country, and I always hoped that one day my opportunity would come.

Who were your idols as a child when watching the World Cup?
Zinedine Zidane, I've always loved him. The way he led France to the title in 1998 was impressive. He is a player I can learn a lot from. And Paulo Wanchope, the greatest player Costa Rica has ever had. He scored in two different World Cups and did very well in England. Now he is an assistant with the national team, which is a good thing for a forward as he can give me good advice.

What's the strength of Costa Rica?
We can play different systems. We can play on the counter-attack, but we also use the long ball and try to win the knock-downs. It's up to the coach to invent a good system because you need several. After all, Italy and England have a different style of play.

> "I've watched the World Cup on TV and always hoped that my chance would come"

How big is the gap in quality between the first team and the bench?
Unlike our opponents we haven't got 10 players on the bench of similar quality. We have 13, maybe 14 players. Don't forget that Costa Rica is a small country. We have 13 players in Europe and many of them aren't playing in the top leagues. Italy and England have entire squads of players who have performed in the Champions League. That's a big difference!

As captain, do you feel a heavy burden knowing that the country is expecting something from you?
People who haven't seen Costa Rica playing will be surprised – we operate more like a team than a bunch of individuals. But, of course, individuals make the difference in matches and therefore I understand that people are expecting a lot from me. I will therefore take my responsibility as captain.

You like to have the name "Bryan" on the back of your shirt. Why is that?
I'm quite alright with the name Bryan Ruiz, but Ruiz is the name of my father. He was a Cuban, was married to my mother but left when I was a one-year-old and never came back. My mother picked the name Bryan, so using my first name is a tribute to my mother. She is the one who has raised me.

Interview by Klaas-Jan Droppert

The SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
Daniel Cambronero (Herediano), **Keylor Navas** (Levante, Spa), **Patrick Pemberton** (Alajuelense)

DEFENDERS
Johnny Acosta (Alajuelense), **Junior Diaz** (Mainz, Ger), **Oscar Duarte** (Club Brugge, Blg), **Waylon Francis** (Columbus Crew, USA), **Christian Gamboa** (Rosenborg, Nor), **Giancarlo Gonzalez** (Columbus Crew, USA), **Roy Miller** (New York Red Bulls, USA, *right*), **Heiner Mora** (Saprissa), **Michael Umana** (Saprissa)

MIDFIELDERS
Michael Barrantes (Aalesund, Nor), **Christian Bolanos** (Copenhagen, Den), **Celso Borges** (AIK, Swe), **Diego Calvo** (Valerenga, Nor), **Jose Miguel Cubero** (Herediano), **Esteban Granados** (Herediano), **Yeltsin Tejeda** (Saprissa)

FORWARDS
Randall Brenes (Cartagines), **Joel Campbell** (Arsenal, Eng), **Bryan Ruiz** (Fulham, Eng), **Marco Urena** (Kuban Krasnodar, Rus)

Bad breaks for duo

Nasty... Oviedo (left) suffers a broken leg

Everton's Bryan Oviedo, who broke a leg in an FA Cup tie against Stevenage in January, has not recovered in time. Real Salt Lake striker Alvaro Saborio was also ruled out after suffering a metatarsal fracture in his right foot.

AZ keeper Esteban Alvarado, Saprissa defender Kendall Waston, midfielders Hansell Arauz of Saprissa, Carlos Hernandez of Wellington Phoenix and Alajuelense's Ariel Rodriguez missed out, as did Columbus Crew striker Jairo Arrieta.

Croatia

Darijo Srna

You're captain of Croatia, but back in 2006 you and two others were expelled from the squad for breaking a hotel curfew in Moscow. Did you learn your lesson the hard way?
Even today I regret that behaviour. There isn't a day that goes by when I don't think about it. Not to appear in the match against Russia really hit me hard. But at the same time I'm grateful to Slaven Bilic, our former coach, who gave me a chance to get back into the team. It was a lesson that I always remember and since then I take every opportunity to behave in a strict sportsmanlike way. And it's been even more important since I took over the captaincy after Niko Kovac's retirement.

You've taken part in three European Championships and one World Cup. How do you think Croatia will fare at Brazil 2014?
Some of my team-mates are hoping that we can repeat or come close to the result from France '98 [when Croatia finished in third place]. I don't want to make any promises, but I am confident that we will give everything.

You played against Brazil in the group stage in 2006 in Berlin. What are your memories of that tournament?
Brazil won 1-0, Kaka scored the goal, but we were as good as them, we just didn't get the result. I think we had a better team at that time, much better than Japan and Australia, but we didn't get out of the group. That's why I am cautious this time.

And Josip Simunic will be missing after his 10-match ban was upheld. What do you make of that?
Joe is a gentle soul, he wouldn't step on an ant. He was born in Australia and was raised by his parents to love and respect the homeland with his heart. He is a true prototype of a patriot.

Flying high...Srna is hoping Croatia can make a big impression in Brazil

During your time in Donetsk, you have twice paid for hundreds of boys and girls from the local orphanage to attend Croatia matches, paying all their expenses. You are also involved in a lot of fundraising events, buying equipment for children's hospitals...
I don't like to talk about it. But I am planning, together with team-mates, to donate a part of our World Cup bonuses to those injured in the heavy flooding in Slavonia in Croatia.

You started your career as a striker until Hajduk coach Nenad Gracan put you at right-back. If you look back, what has been your favourite match?
I don't like to look back, I prefer to look forward. I hope I'll remember one of the forthcoming World Cup games as my favourite one. I'm really hoping that my generation confirms its worth at this tournament.

> "I'm really hoping that my generation confirms its worth at this tournament"

And what about your future?
I don't even want to think about the end of my career and I would like to lead Croatia at the next European Championship in 2016, in France. Of course, it all depends on my fitness.

Does the future for your club, Shakhtar Donetsk, lie in Ukraine or in Russia?
It was not easy for Shakhtar to finish the season, we had to play some matches on neutral ground in Kiev. I think that because of all these events off the pitch, we lost the Cup Final and we missed a chance to do the double. However, I'm sure that Shakhtar will continue to play in the championship of Ukraine.

Interview by Zdravko Reic

The SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
Stipe Pletikosa (Rostov, Rus), **Danijel Subasic** (Monaco, Fra), **Oliver Zelenika** (Dinamo Zagreb)

DEFENDERS
Vedran Corluka (Lokomotiv Moscow, Rus), **Dejan Lovren** (Southampton, Eng), **Danijel Pranjic** (Panathinaikos, Gre), **Gordon Schildenfeld** (Panathinaikos, Gre), **Darijo Srna** (Shakhtar Donetsk, Ukr), **Domagoj Vida** (Dynamo Kiev, Ukr), **Sime Vrsaljko** (Genoa, Ita)

MIDFIELDERS
Marcelo Brozovic (Dinamo Zagreb), **Mateo Kovacic** (Inter, Ita), **Ivan Mocinic** (Rijeka), **Luka Modric** (Real Madrid, Spa), **Ivan Rakitic** (Sevilla, Spa), **Sammir** (Getafe, Spa, *left*), **Ognjen Vukojevic** (Dynamo Kiev, Ukr)

FORWARDS
Eduardo (Shakhtar Donetsk, Ukr), **Nikica Jelavic** (Hull City, Eng), **Mario Mandzukic** (Bayern, Ger), **Ivica Olic** (Wolfsburg, Ger), **Ivan Perisic** (Wolfsburg, Ger), **Ante Rebic** (Fiorentina, Ita)

Injuries deny Kovac

Injury denied coach Niko Kovac four players from his preliminary squad of 30, with Dynamo Kiev midfielder Niko Kranjcar, who spent the season on loan at English second-tier side Queens Park Rangers, Hamburg duo Milan Badelj and Ivo Ilicevic, and Dnipro's Ivan Strinic (*left*) all ruled out. Kovac can, however, call on two Brazilian-born players: Eduardo and Sammir.

Ecuador

Jefferson Montero

How do you see Ecuador's group matches at the World Cup?
It's not going to be easy, against Switzerland, Honduras or France. We have to take advantage of the characteristics we have, and that is what coach Reinaldo Rueda is pointing out to us. We have to make the most of our attacking pace. And we have to take our chances. We've been missing too many recently. And we know there'll be a price to pay for that in the World Cup. It's something we're working on in training.

Threat...Montero caused England plenty of problems in their recent friendly

How have Ecuador's preparations for Brazil gone?
Our build-up has been good. We played well to get a 1-1 draw against Holland, not so well in the 3-1 defeat to Mexico, and things went really well against England. Of course, it would have been better to have won the game, but against England nothing is going to be easy.

The SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
Maximo Banguera (Barcelona), **Adrian Bone** (El Nacional), **Alexander Dominguez** (LDU Quito)

DEFENDERS
Gabriel Achilier (Emelec), **Walter Ayovi** (Pachuca, Mex), **Oscar Bagui** (Emelec), **Frickson Erazo** (Flamengo, Bra), **Jorge Guagua** (Emelec), **Juan Carlos Paredes** (Barcelona, *top*)

MIDFIELDERS
Segundo Castillo (Al Hilal, Sau), **Carlos Gruezo** (Stuttgart, Ger, *middle*), **Renato Ibarra** (Vitesse, Hol), **Fidel Martinez** (Tijuana, Mex), **Edison Mendez** (Santa Fe), **Christian Noboa** (Dinamo Moscow, Rus), **Luis Saritama** (Barcelona), **Antonio Valencia** (Manchester United, Eng)

FORWARDS
Michael Arroyo (Atlante, Mex, *bottom*), **Jaime Ayovi** (Tijuana, Mex), **Felipe Caicedo** (Al Jazira, UAE), **Jefferson Montero** (Morelia, Mex), **Joao Rojas** (Cruz Azul, Mex) **Enner Valencia** (Pachuca, Mex),

Rueda keeps faith

Castillo...included despite injury

Coach Reinaldo Rueda named Segundo Castillo in his squad despite the midfielder suffering a knee injury in a friendly against Mexico in May, with a challenge in which Luis Montes broke a leg.

Also included is 35-year-old midfielder Edison Mendez, who is the third-most capped player in Ecuador's history.

So you're ready?
We're going to spend the remaining days getting ready to give our all. We're ready. I'm not anxious because anxiety is not good, but I can't wait to get started.

Are you confident for the opening match against Switzerland in Brasilia?
I don't feel that I've got a guaranteed place in the starting line-up and I think all of us feel the same. Everyone is fighting for a place, and we all hope that the XI who start will do as well as possible. It's been good to play these warm-up games because I've been coming back from a run of injuries which made things hard for me, but I'm feeling good.

This will be Ecuador's third World Cup appearance. Are you growing in confidence when you play the established teams?
Honestly, the gap between us and the bigger teams is narrowing. We are all becoming more equal. We know that Spain, England and Brazil have always been great, but in South America itself we are all equal, as our results in the qualifying showed. We will go to the World Cup and face our opponents as equals. We're confident we can go a long way.

You had a spell in Europe with Villarreal and there is speculation linking you with clubs in England. Is there any truth to those stories?
I have always said that one of my goals is to return to Europe, so hopefully if I have a good World Cup, I can realise that ambition.

Interview by Esteban Coppola

England

Steven Gerrard

Q&A

You'll be facing Liverpool team-mate Luis Suarez at the World Cup. How highly do you rate him?
He's a very quiet guy and a family man. I am quite close to him, sit next to him in the dressing room, and speak to him on the phone quite a bit and exchange text messages . And every time you ask what he's doing he is always with the family. He's very quiet, a very good professional. But when he is on the pitch or the training ground he turns into a fighter, turns into a winner. When you are trying to win these big prizes, against top players and top teams, Luis Suarez is someone you want in your team. I'd go so far as to say he's the best player I have played with – which is some accolade, considering I have played with some fantastic players.

How do you rate England's chances at the World Cup?
I don't want to raise expectations, but as I always say going into a major tournament, if you get that bit of luck, if the ball drops your way, you can achieve the impossible. I've done it with Liverpool before, I saw Chelsea do it [in the Champions League 2012]. Not all the time does the best team win these competitions, so we can go there with hope and belief.

How important will Wayne Rooney be in Brazil?
He would admit he hasn't always hit his high standards at big tournaments, but knowing Wayne as a friend and as a player he'll feel the disappointment we all shared at Euro 2012. He'll be looking to shine in Brazil.

It seems this time around, the expectations of the nation are quite low. Is that a good thing for you?
Well I think it can help, yeah. There's no harm in dreaming. Us players dream as well and you always say to yourself, 'what if'. What if it does happen and you prove all the doubters wrong and you go on to have a successful World Cup? So there is no harm in dreaming, but the reality is that there's a lot of top teams going to this World Cup. It's a very difficult competition. But, yeah, there's excitement and belief in the squad that we can go there and do well.

The likes of Raheem Sterling, Ross Barkley and Adam Lallana haven't been tainted by past failures at World Cups. Could that work in your favour?
Yeah I do think it's a fair point. You know they are young lads who have had terrific seasons and have got endless amounts of talent and ability. All the England fans and players hope they can perform at a World Cup – go in with no fear and give it their best shot. That's the same for everyone, whether you have experienced a bit of failure or not. Everyone is determined to do well for their country.

Do you use your past experience to help you when you get to a World Cup?
Yeah of course, I think experience is vital in this game, especially at the level we play at. It is also really exciting to think of the youthful players that are in the squad, with the seasons they have had and dreaming of what they are capable of producing in the World Cup. Time will tell how it goes, let's see what happens but we are going to give it our best shot.

How will you adapt to the conditions in Brazil?
We had warm weather training in Portugal and then Miami. The idea was to try and acclimatise as quickly as possible to the heat in Brazil. What I will say is, it is the same for all the teams out there and they are going to find the conditions tough as well. Hopefully we can cope, perform and prove a few doubters wrong.

Interview by Stuart Appleby

Leading by example...Gerrard gets in a tackle against Peru

The SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
Fraser Forster (Celtic, Sco), **Ben Foster** (West Bromwich Albion), **Joe Hart** (Manchester City)

DEFENDERS
Leighton Baines (Everton), **Gary Cahill** (Chelsea), **Phil Jagielka** (Everton), **Glen Johnson** (Liverpool), **Phil Jones** (Manchester United), **Luke Shaw** (Southampton), **Chris Smalling** (Manchester United)

MIDFIELDERS
Ross Barkley (Everton), **Steven Gerrard** (Liverpool), **Jordan Henderson** (Liverpool), **Adam Lallana** (Southampton), **Frank Lampard** (Chelsea), **James Milner** (Man City), **Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain** (Arsenal), **Raheem Sterling** (Liverpool), **Jack Wilshere** (Arsenal)

FORWARDS
Rickie Lambert (Liverpool, *left*), **Wayne Rooney** (Manchester United), **Daniel Sturridge** (Liverpool), **Danny Welbeck** (Manchester United)

Young Lions get chance

Roy Hodgson named a youthful squad, including 20-year-old Ross Barkley and teenagers Raheem Sterling and Luke Shaw (*right*) – who was picked ahead of Ashley Cole. The 33-year-old Chelsea left-back, who has played at three World Cups, announced his retirement from international football after missing out. Michael Carrick, Andy Carroll and Kyle Walker also didn't make it, although 35-year-old Frank Lampard did – and was named vice-captain.

France

Blaise Matuidi

What's the feeling in the French camp for this World Cup?
We're in good shape. We've all been in World Cup mode for a while as everyone has been thinking about the tournament every day since we qualified. All the players will tell you the same thing: we're really focused. The hardest thing to do has been to make sure that we don't peak too soon, both physically and mentally. It's all been about timing our preparations right, making sure we've done everything possible to arrive in Brazil at the very top of our game.

How ready do you feel for this challenge on a personal level?
I feel really good. I had a pretty successful season, I looked after myself physically and I was able to rest when I needed to. I'm at an age now where I have to take that side of the game seriously. But I definitely feel ready for this World Cup. To be fair, the plans that were put in place were designed to make sure that's the case.

You didn't make an appearance at Euro 2012 because of injury. Will that give you extra motivation this time?
I think about missing out during that competition a lot. I learnt plenty from tough times like that and everything I went through helped me to mature as a person and as a player. I now know what to do or what not to do to avoid getting those kinds of injuries. We've had a good month to prepare for Brazil and I was also working on my own programme outside of the regular sessions with the squad to make sure I'm 100 per cent fit and ready.

Do you feel you're a "first name on the team sheet" player for France now?
Not at all. The coach has chosen 23 players for his World Cup squad and I'm in the group, but I don't feel like I'm indispensable or that I can't be dropped. I always try to do my best, to add what I can to the team, but so does everyone else. I feel more and more comfortable in this French team and I think my performances in the last few games have shown that. But I have to stay focused and keep working hard, because at international level things can always change really quickly.

Do you think France have the necessary firepower to cause other teams problems at the World Cup?
Of course I do. We've got an attacking line-up that can compete with anyone. We can boast Karim Benzema, who is without doubt one of the best attackers in the world. We've got Franck Ribery, who got close to winning the Ballon d'Or. There's Loic Remy, who scored a lot of goals in a very difficult league in England last season. There's Antoine Griezmann, who also scored plenty of goals in Spain. And there's Mathieu Valbuena, who's a great passer of the ball. We're very happy to have players of this quality and hope they'll help us go a long way in the tournament.

People will be casting envious eyes over a French midfield that contains you, Yohan Cabaye and Paul Pogba...
I think that's a midfield line-up with a good blend, but I don't know if it's the ideal midfield line-up. We'll have to prove that in the competition. I hope our performances in Brazil will give people the chance to write some nice things about us. The three of us get on well off the pitch, and we know each other better and better as time goes on. It also helps that Yo and I are together at PSG, of course.

Can you handle the pressure of such a big tournament?
I'd say that I'm experienced enough to be able to deal with the pressure and am more excited about playing in the biggest competition any footballer can compete in. I can't wait to get started. But it's true that we all need to contribute when it comes to dealing with the pressure. As a group we don't have lots of experience of playing in big tournaments, but plenty of our players are used to performing in big games. Personally, I'm now at an age where I have to step up to the plate. I'm a player who gets involved and who likes to set an example on the pitch.

How important will the French public's support be during the tournament?
I hope the French public will be behind us all the way, as they were throughout qualifying. We have to give them a reason to carry on backing us, of course. But I think the team spirit we've shown over our last few games has been really good and I reckon our supporters will be behind us over in Brazil because of that. Believe me, we really want to give them something to shout about.

Interview by Howard Johnson

Hot shot...Matuidi scores during France's 2-0 win over Holland in March

The SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
Mickael Landreau (Bastia), **Hugo Lloris** (Tottenham Hotspur, Eng), **Stephane Ruffier** (Monaco, *top*)

DEFENDERS
Mathieu Debuchy (Newcastle United, Eng), **Lucas Digne** (Paris Saint-Germain), **Patrice Evra** (Manchester United, Eng), **Laurent Koscielny** (Arsenal, Eng), **Eliaquim Mangala** (Porto, Por), **Bacary Sagna** (Arsenal, Eng), **Mamadou Sakho** (Liverpool, Eng), **Raphael Varane** (Real Madrid, Spa)

MIDFIELDERS
Yohan Cabaye (Paris Saint-Germain), **Clement Grenier** (Lyon), **Blaise Matuidi** (Paris Saint-Germain), **Rio Mavuba** (Lille), **Paul Pogba** (Juventus, Ita, *middle*), **Moussa Sissoko** (Newcastle United, Eng), **Mathieu Valbuena** (Marseille)

FORWARDS
Karim Benzema (Real Madrid, Spa), **Olivier Giroud** (Arsenal, Eng), **Antoine Griezmann** (Real Sociedad, Spa), **Loic Remy** (Queens Park Rangers, Eng, *bottom*), **Franck Ribery** (Bayern Munich, Ger)

Coach puts team above stars

Manchester City midfielder Samir Nasri was left out, with Didier Deschamps explaining: "Samir has not performed that well with France. I built the best squad, I did not pick the best 23 players." Nasri's club-mate Gael Clichy was omitted, while Monaco defender Eric Abidal was reported to be retiring from international football after failing to make the squad. Marseille keeper Steve Mandanda was replaced by Stephane Ruffier.

Not wanted... midfielder Nasri

Germany

Thomas Muller

Q&A

Last year you scored six goals and made two others in nine starts for the national team. Do you now see yourself as an automatic choice on the right side?
Yes, I've no reason to look at it any other way as 2013 went well for me. I played regularly in the World Cup qualifiers. I see myself as an important part of the team.

Do you need that feeling of security or is it better to be under pressure?
The basic trust of your coach, naturally, is important. But that doesn't mean you continue to be picked whatever your level of performance.

Do you prefer Philipp Lahm as your full-back partner on the right or in central midfield?
For me, it's great when Philipp plays behind me. He's an outstanding player and supports me going forward. We make a good duo.

You won the Golden Boot and were joint-top scorer at the 2010 finals. Can you do that again in Brazil?
Naturally it's something I would like to strive for, but I also know it's next to impossible. No one has done it before and there are some good strikers in action.

By the time the 2022 World Cup in Qatar comes around you could be gunning for Ronaldo's record of 15 goals in World Cup finals...
I've no ambition in this area. A world title with Germany will be enough of an honour.

Is the world title the only logical goal?
Of course. Our aim is the title. We're not in Brazil to enjoy our training quarters. We know we have the class. But it won't be a bad World Cup if we don't win it. The best team doesn't always come first, otherwise Barcelona would have won every Champions League in their golden era.

You are renowned for your versatility. Does that make it more difficult for you to maintain consistency?
Throughout my time as a professional I've played in several different attacking positions and haven't done badly at all. My talent expresses itself in the final third. I can be dangerous in many positions. It's not my position on the pitch which matters the most, more my form on the day.

A year ago you said in an interview that you were more a player for efficiency than beautiful football. Yet Bayern Munich coach Pep Guardiola is all about technical brilliance...
Wonderful football is only wonderful when the efficiency is there. We need a player who climbs the hill. That's my job.

Would you be prepared to play as the lone striker in the national team?
It's functioned well when I've played in that role for Bayern. While I'm used to playing on the right, I haven't felt uncomfortable as a striker. I'm not one to become nervous when asked to do other things.

What's been the thinking behind you playing up front?
The aim is to make sure we have numerical superiority in midfield. I'm not one to wait up front for a direct confrontation with a central defender. Instead, I'll drop back, look to work the flanks and do my share of defensive duties.

Seven Bayern players are in the German squad. Why not simply use the Guardiola method in the *Nationalmannschaft*?
In its basic structure, the football played by Bayern and our national team are not so different, but the types of player are. Mesut Ozil is no Franck Ribery or Arjen Robben. Mesut has other qualities. With Germany we play fresh and modern football, an open game in which we don't hide. We always pose a goal threat, but also have to stand up well defensively.

> "Wonderful football is only wonderful when the efficiency is there. We need a player who climbs the hill. That's my job"

Mr Versatile... Muller has played in a variety of roles for club and country

Is Germany good enough to go all the way in Brazil?
Sure. But unfortunately I can't guarantee it. We definitely have improved on 2010, when many of the team, including me, were on a sort of voyage of discovery. We are more stable and believe we will have a lot to say in where the title ends up. But we had a great opportunity to do something fantastic at Euro 2012, only to lose in the semi-final against Italy. In football you can't work everything out in advance. There are always variables that come into the equation. What makes football interesting is the percentage of luck involved.

Interview by Karl-Heinz Wild/ESM

The SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
Manuel Neuer (Bayern Munich), **Roman Weidenfeller** (Borussia Dortmund), **Ron-Robert Zieler** (Hanover)

DEFENDERS
Jerome Boateng (Bayern), **Erik Durm** (Borussia Dortmund), **Kevin Grosskreutz** (Borussia Dortmund), **Benedikt Howedes** (Schalke), **Mats Hummels** (Borussia Dortmund), **Philipp Lahm** (Bayern), **Per Mertesacker** (Arsenal, Eng)

MIDFIELDERS
Julian Draxler (Schalke), **Matthias Ginter** (Freiburg), **Mario Gotze** (Bayern), **Sami Khedira** (Real Madrid, Spa), **Christoph Kramer** (Bor M'gladbach), **Toni Kroos** (Bayern), **Thomas Muller** (Bayern), **Mesut Ozil** (Arsenal, Eng), **Lukas Podolski** (Arsenal, Eng), **Marco Reus** (Dortmund), **Andre Schurrle** (Chelsea, Eng), **Bastian Schweinsteiger** (Bayern)

FORWARDS
Miroslav Klose (Lazio, Ita)

Khedira's importance

Joachim Low has taken "a calculated risk" on Real Madrid's Sami Khedira (*right*), who missed most of the season with a knee injury, but did not take the same

kind of gamble on Fiorentina striker Mario Gomez, who is just returning from his own knee injury. "Sami's will, discipline and ambition have ensured we're positive about his chances," explained Low. "He is one of those players who has a great deal of importance to this team, on and off the field."

Ghana

Jonathan Mensah

You were the youngest player in the Ghana squad at the World Cup four years ago...
Yes, I had the honour to be in the squad in addition to being the youngest. It was great and I'm very happy to be back in the squad for this 2014 World Cup.

You played three matches at the last World Cup despite your tender age. What impact do you think that has had on your career?
I played three matches and these matches enabled Ghana to go to the quarter-finals. I was very happy. To experience all of that as a young player was unbelievable. To play for my country, with my family watching. It was a great experience and I learned a lot.

What do you think of your group this time?
It has motivated me to train even more, because I know that Ghana is in a very difficult group. It will be very difficult for us. It will be important for us to be well prepared, both physically and psychologically.

Is this Ghana team stronger than the side that reached the quarter-finals in South Africa?
Yes, I think so. We've played together for a while. Most players who were there in 2010 are still part of the team. We are united and we've become a lot stronger over the last four years. There's also that bond within the squad. The senior players welcome young players like their own blood brothers. It doesn't matter where you play or who you are and what you've achieved in football, everyone is just fighting for one cause: for the country and our passionate fans.

> "We hope to finally win a trophy soon, for us and for our country"

One to watch... Mensah is tipped to make a big impression in Brazil

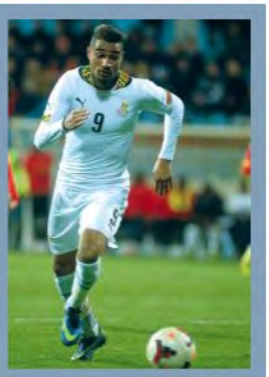
But this promising side has had a chance since 2010 to win three African Nations Cups and failed. Was this very frustrating for you?
Yes. A little anyway. But I'm not the only one to be frustrated. The whole team, the country, everyone is frustrated by this situation. Because it is 32 years since Ghana has won a major tournament [the 1982 African Nations Cup]. It's getting too long...we hope to finally win a trophy soon, for us and for our country.

Do you often get confused with John Mensah, who has been such a stalwart for Ghana down the years?
Sometimes it happens, but not often. We have the same name so I suppose it does happen here and there. People normally ask whether we are brothers or cousins. But I'm afraid not. He is a close friend. I've learnt a lot from him.

And that is the reason your first name is on your shirt?
Yes, it comes from the 2010 World Cup because John Mensah was also in the team at the time. I wanted people to know who I was and so it was better to be known as Jonathan. That's why I used my first name. It has continued like that in Ligue 1.

Interview by James Cannon

The SQUAD



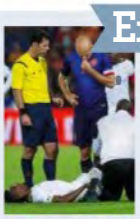
GOALKEEPERS
Stephen Adams (Aduana Stars), **Fatau Dauda** (Orlando Pirates, SAf), **Adam Kwarasey** (Stromsgodset, Nor)

DEFENDERS
Harrison Afful (Esperance, Tun), **John Boye** (Rennes, Fra), **Samuel Inkoom** (Platanias, Gre), **Jonathan Mensah** (Evian, Fra), **Daniel Opare** (Standard Liege, Blg), **Rashid Sumalia** (Mamelodi Sundowns, SAf)

MIDFIELDERS
Afriyie Acquah (Parma, Ita), **Albert Adomah** (Middlesbrough, Eng), **Emmanuel Agyemang-Badu** (Udinese, Ita), **Kwadwo Asamoah** (Juventus, Ita), **Christian Atsu** (Chelsea, Eng), **Andre Ayew** (Marseille, Fra), **Michael Essien** (Milan, Ita), **Rabiu Mohammed** (Kuban Krasnodar, Rus), **Sulley Muntari** (Milan, Ita), **Mubarak Wakaso** (Rubin Kazan, Rus)

FORWARDS
Jordan Ayew (Marseille, Fra), **Kevin-Prince Boateng** (Schalke, Ger, *above*), **Asamoah Gyan** (Al Ain, UAE), **Abdul Majeed Waris** (Spartak Moscow, Rus)

Experienced trio return



Injury victim... Akaminko

Kevin-Prince Boateng and the brothers Jordan and Andre Ayew, who all sat out last year's African Nations Cup, are included.

Eskisehirspor defender Jerry Akaminko misses out after injuring an ankle in the closing stages of the friendly defeat by Holland and will be sidelined for three months.

Back...the Ayew brothers

Greece

Kostas Mitroglou

Q&A

How do you feel about taking part in the first major tournament of your career?
Its great. It's a huge honour, a wonderful achievement and a blessing to take part in the biggest sport tournament of all. And especially as it is in Brazil.

It was your goals in the play-off against Romania that led Greece to the finals. As a striker, do you feel any extra pressure?
I was over the moon after the play-offs, both for the team's success and for contributing to this by doing what I'm supposed to do. I don't feel any extra pressure. I'm just the one of the eleven on the field and every one of us always fights for the best result.

Which is Greece's biggest strength?
I think that Greece, during the last decade, has always had a specific game plan, and those characteristics are unchanged and visible to everyone. Our strengths are team play, defensive solidarity, effectiveness and fighting spirit.

Greece have often been accused of being ultra defensive. Would you prefer a more attacking approach?
Since 2004, Greece has taken part in five out of six major football tournaments. This implies we have a successful approach. Yes, we have our own way of handling matches and tournaments, but at the end of the day the result is the most important. We're always trying to give 101 per cent on the pitch, we're always trying to win. That's what we want, that's what everyone who takes part in football, wants to do: to win. As for me, no, I fit in perfectly to our play, to our tactics and to our mentality. I see no reason for this to change.

What will be regarded as a success or a failure in these finals?
The goal is clear: we want to qualify for the knockout stage. Anything beyond that, would be an excess, a huge success. Failure? As I said, we're at the finals of a major tournament once more, so I think that we're successful already by constantly participating. I doubt that any outcome in Brazil could be regarded as a failure.

What are your personal goals?
You can't be successful as a player if the team isn't. My goals and my success will be attached to the team. If I contribute by scoring, by playing well, by making a difference, then I'll be satisfied.

Fulham were relegated at the end of the season. Do you think you made a mistake going there?
I had three very tough months. I'm really sorry for not being able to help Fulham. I was totally aware of where I was going back in January. I was happy to play in the best league in the world, for a team fighting for survival. I'm never afraid of taking a risk, that's the way I act and live, that's the way I've learnt growing up as a person and as a professional.

How do you feel about being the most expensive Greek player of all time?
It's an honour and a recognition of my value; a sign of trust in me and my abilities. As for the pressure, when I'm on the field I never think of money, prices, values. Nothing. I just want to play good, score goals, help my team and win.

What went wrong during your time in London? Was it just your injury or something to do with the arrival of a new manager?
I want to stress something now because I have heard and read a lot of nonsense. My relationship with Mr Magath was very good. He's an experienced and respected manager, who helps his players to improve. Regarding my injury, unfortunately, a seemingly small setback proved to be extremely time-consuming and persistent. So the necessary time I needed to complete my therapy and regain the strength in my knee was the reason why I missed the relegation battle, and the reason why I wasn't able to contribute what everyone expected from me.

Will you stay at Fulham now that they are in the Championship?
I don't know a lot about the Championship and I'm sure that neither does the club, as for years Fulham were a steady member of the Premier League. London is a great place to live, it gives you everything, and Fulham fans are unbelievable. Now, though, I'm only focused on my national team and the World Cup.

Interview by Antonis Oikonomidis

Goal...Mitroglou celebrates scoring against Romania in the play-offs

The SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
Panagiotis Glykos (PAOK), **Stefanos Kapino** (Panathinaikos, *top*), **Orestis Karnezis** (Udinese, Ita)

DEFENDERS
Jose Holebas (Olympiakos), **Giannis Maniatis** (Olympiakos), **Kostas Manolas** (Olympiakos), **Vangelis Moras** (Verona, Ita), **Sokratis Papastathopoulos** (B Dortmund, Ger), **Vassilis Torosidis** (Roma, Ita), **Georgios Tzavellas** (PAOK), **Loukas Vyntra** (Levante, Spa, *middle*)

MIDFIELDERS
Lazaros Christodoulopoulos (Bologna, Ita), **Giannis Fetfatzidis** (Genoa, Ita), **Giorgos Karagounis** (Fulham, Eng), **Kostas Katsouranis** (PAOK), **Panagiotis Kone** (Bologna, Ita), **Andreas Samaris** (Olympiakos), **Panagiotis Tachtsidis** (Torino, Ita, *bottom*), **Alexandros Tziolis** (PAOK)

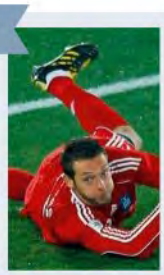
FORWARDS
Fanis Gekas (Konyaspor, Tur), **Kostas Mitroglou** (Fulham, Eng), **Dimitris Salpingidis** (PAOK), **Georgios Samaras** (Celtic, Sco)

Santos' safe choices

Kostas Mitroglou was included in Fernando Santos' squad despite playing just 120 minutes, and failing to score, following his £10m move from Olympiakos to Fulham in January.

Apollon Smyrni goalkeeper Alexandros Tzorvas, who played in all three of Greece's games in South Africa, was also cut from the final squad.

"I was sorry not to include players that helped us in qualification," says Santos. "But the national team is above players and above the coach. We must use the safest choices."



Cut...Tzorvas misses out

Holland

Wesley Sneijder

Q&A

Louis Van Gaal has been very critical about you over the past year. Were you surprised to be in the squad?
No, because my form and fitness are ok. Every weekend I've played for Galatasaray on a high level. That means that I'm fit.

When you were called up for the friendly against France, after a long period on the sidelines, did it feel like a final test?
There was no extra pressure, not a feeling that I had to prove myself. I was totally myself and I did what I do best. There was no reason to play differently because the whole world was looking over my shoulder.

Did Van Gaal's comments about your supposed lack of fitness bring the best out of you?
Subconsciously there is a motivation. But a player makes the best of a situation all by himself. At least that's what I did.

What is your favoured role in the team?
Playing just behind the front men so that I can deliver the pass. When I'm playing like that I often end up on the left flank.

Is Holland's switch to the new 5-3-2 system an advantage for you?
Yes it is, because that system suits me better. I'm one of the three players behind the front two and I'm covered by two men behind me when I push up. That gives a firm grip. In the friendly against Ghana I was still trying to figure out what was best for me. We should do certain aspects better during the World Cup, but it was a new system for me and just needed time to get used to it.

Is it still a joy to play for Holland?
It always is, because it is a higher level than at my club. At Galatasaray some players need three touches before delivering the ball. At the national team even the young guys use only one touch. That's the Dutch masterclass, a matter of education.

> "Every time I speak to a Brazilian player, he starts talking about their defeat in the last World Cup quarter-finals. They still fear us"

Back...Sneijder returned to the Dutch side against France in March

Do you get the feeling that with just one mistake it could all be over for you?
That's something the media try to create by continuing to ask Van Gaal's opinion about me. Personally, I'm not reacting to these questions anymore.

Can you accept a role as a reserve without rising in mutiny?
I want to go to Brazil, so if that's my role I have to accept it. And mutiny? Come on, during the World Cup I'm turning 30. That's not an age to rise in mutiny. Besides, the World Cup is only every four years and everybody wants to be there. Especially in Brazil. I want to play and give Holland something extra. It's up to me and my form whether I'm playing or not.

Van Gaal picked you ahead of youngsters such as Marco Van Ginkel and Adam Maher...
That's not a surprise for me. I have the experience and know what is necessary to play a World Cup.

What kind of experience?
I know what it's like to play a World Cup when you are away from home for a long time. In that period you have to create an atmosphere based on performing; focussing on the same goal like we did in 2010 perfectly. The most important question is are players mentally capable of delivering the best? Can they still deliver after the group phase? I know I can.

How do you feel about a potential meeting with the hosts, Brazil, in the knockout stage?
Every time I speak to a Brazilian player, he starts talking about their defeat in the last World Cup quarter-finals. They still fear us. But it all depends on rising to the occasion and perfect tactics. Our way of play should be playing at high speed and putting the opponent under pressure.

Is there a different approach between Van Gaal and Bert Van Marwijk?
Both have a different view. In 2010 the team was already cemented, now everything is open until the last moment and the squad, form and team play are hard to predict. That's why this is going to be an interesting World Cup for Holland.

Is this your last World Cup?
Don't pretend that I'm an old man! In four years time I will be 34. That's not an age to miss another World Cup. As long as I remain fit I will play at the highest level.

Interview by Elf Voetbal/ESM

The SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
Jasper Cillessen (Ajax), **Tim Krul** (Newcastle United, Eng), **Michel Vorm** (Swansea City, Eng)

DEFENDERS
Daley Blind (Ajax), **Stefan De Vrij** (Feyenoord), **Daryl Janmaat** (Feyenoord), **Terence Kongolo** (Feyenoord), **Bruno Martins Indi** (Feyenoord), **Joel Veltman** (Ajax), **Paul Verhaegh** (Augsburg, Ger, *right*), **Ron Vlaar** (A Villa, Eng)

MIDFIELDERS
Jordy Clasie (Feyenoord), **Jonathan De Guzman** (Villarreal, Spa), **Nigel De Jong** (Milan, Ita), **Leroy Fer** (Norwich, Eng), **Wesley Sneijder** (Galatasaray, Tur), **Georginio Wijnaldum** (PSV)

FORWARDS
Memphis Depay (PSV), **Klaas-Jan Huntelaar** (Schalke, Ger), **Dirk Kuyt** (Fenerbahce, Tur), **Jeremain Lens** (Dynamo Kiev, Ukr), **Robin Van Persie** (Man United, Eng), **Arjen Robben** (Bayern, Ger)

Van der Vaart misses out

Hamburg's 31-year-old midfielder Rafael Van der Vaart (*right*), who has 109 caps and was the most experienced player in Louis van Gaal's provisional squad, was ruled out with a calf strain in his right leg. Van Gaal also left out Paris Saint-Germain right-back Gregory Van der Wiel, who had been suffering with tendinitis. The mercurial Wesley Sneijder was included, despite the coach expressing doubts about the playmaker's fitness.

Honduras

Emilio Izaguirre

Q&A

Honduras lost to Turkey and Israel in the build-up. What is the team's current mood?
The results are misleading because we were not giving everything. Some players were more concerned about not getting injured than winning those matches.

But fans are concerned and the team has been criticised...
It's hard to explain our plans to the general public. We know what we want to do, but that stays within the team and we cannot disclose our strategies. We would have loved to get good results to help our fans be more at ease, but we are confident that we will be ok in the World Cup.

So, the confidence within the team remains untouched...
Yes. Actually, I think that all the criticism will help us to show a completely different face during the World Cup and will make us prove to the whole country that we can have a great tournament. We lost two games and we obviously want to win, but the most important thing is the World Cup.

Interview by Martin Del Palacio Lange

The SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
Donis Escober (Olimpia), **Luis Lopez** (Real Espana), **Noel Valladares** (Olimpia)

DEFENDERS
Brayan Beckeles (Olimpia), **Victor Bernardez** (San Jose Earthquakes, USA), **Osman Chavez** (Wisla Krakow, Pol), **Maynor Figueroa** (Hull City, Eng), **Juan Carlos Garcia** (Wigan Athletic, Eng), **Emilio Izaguirre** (Celtic, Sco), **Juan Pablo Montes** (Motagua)

MIDFIELDERS
Marvin Chavez (Chivas USA, USA), **Jorge Claros** (Motagua), **Roger Espinoza** (Wigan Athletic, Eng), **Oscar Garcia** (Houston Dynamo, USA), **Luis Garrido** (Olimpia), **Mario Martinez** (Real Espana), **Andy Najar** (Anderlecht, Blg), **Wilson Palacios** (Stoke City), **Edder Delgado** (Real Espana)

FORWARDS
Jerry Bengtson (New England Revolution, USA), **Carlo Costly** (Real Espana), **Jerry Palacios** (Alajuelense), **Rony Martinez** (Real Sociedad)

Suarez satisfied

After using 54 players in qualifying, coach Luis Fernando Suarez says of those who did not make the cut: "I ask the ones who have not been called up to understand. A lot of players were part of this process, but only 23 can be called. I cannot keep everybody satisfied."

Among those who did make it is 20-year-old keeper Luis Lopez, who Suarez believes has "enormous potential" and will one day succeed Noel Valladares as first choice.

One for the future...goalkeeping prospect Lopez

Iran

Javad Nekounam

Q&A

What difference has the arrival of Carlos Queiroz made to Iran?
We are more disciplined on and off the pitch. We look a very well organised team which has improved tactically as well. Queiroz is very professional and a high-profile coach. But we must also remember that the facilities and resources here are nowhere near what he had available at the likes of Manchester United or Real Madrid.

Having to playing against the likes of Messi, Aguero and Di Maria must worry you...
No, I don't think so, as it is also a rare opportunity to play against quality superstars. We will play against them with respect but, make no mistake, we will make them work hard.

Playing in the 2006 World Cup in Germany opened the gates of European club football for you – and you joined Osasuna. Can that happen for some of your team-mates this time around?
Absolutely. It is a wonderful opportunity. For some players it is a once-in-a-lifetime chance. You have to take it. If you do well in Brazil, many will knock at your door.

After almost six years in Spain you went back to Iran before moving to Qatar...
After so many successful years in Osasuna, I joined Esteghlal, my boyhood club. It was a dream come true. I do not regret joining Esteghlal, but considering the problems I had there, I would think much harder about leaving a European club for an Iranian club again.

You have scored more than 35 international goals, which is a fantastic record for a defensive midfielder...

I agree with you. It is a great stat. I love scoring goals and I always try to put myself in goalscoring positions. This is something I learned from two previous international players, Mehdi Hasheminasab and Karim Bagheri.

What was the most important international goal you scored?
It is difficult to choose. All of them bring sweet memories for me, but I think the goal against South Korea in Tehran in the qualifiers was very crucial. We were down to 10 men and it was the match winner.

Interview by Adel Ferdowsipour

The SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
Rahman Ahmadi (Sepahan), **Daniel Davari** (Braunschweig, Ger), **Alireza Haghighi** (Sporting Covilha, Por)

DEFENDERS
Ahmad Alenemeh (Naft Tehran), **Hashem Beikzadeh** (Esteghlal), **Mehrdad Beitashour** (Vancouver W, USA), **Jalal Hosseini** (Persepolis), **Hossein Mahini** (Persepolis), **Pejman Montazeri** (Umm Salal, Qat), **Mehrdad Pooladi** (Persepolis), **Amir Hossein Sadeghi** (Esteghlal)

MIDFIELDERS
Ghasem Haddadifar (Zob Ahan), **Reza Haghighi** (Persepolis), **Ehsan Hajsafy** (Sepahan), **Javad Nekounam** (Kuwait SC, Kuw), **Bakhtiar Rahmani** (Foolad), **Andranik Teymourian** (Esteghlal)

FORWARDS
Karim Ansarifard (Tractor Sazi), **Ashkan Dejagah** (Fulham, Eng), **Reza Ghoochannejhad** (Charlton Athletic, Eng), **Khosro Heydari** (Esteghlal), **Alireza Jahanbakhsh** (NEC, Hol), **Masoud Shojaei** (Las Palmas, Spa)

On standby

Fit...Beikzadeh (*right*) looks to have overcome an injury scare

Hashem Beikzadeh, who hurt a calf muscle in a warm-up match against Montenegro, has been declared fit and included in the final squad of 23. However, Mohammad Khanzadeh of Zob Ahan, will also travel to Brazil as cover.

The squad's preparations were rocked when assistant coach Majid Salih resigned less than two weeks before the team's opening game, against Nigeria in Curitiba.

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Italy

Gianluigi Buffon

Q&A

So, how do you think Italy will fare in Brazil?
I'd say we are a solid, organised side that gives nothing away. It will be hard to beat us, hard for everyone. You have to sweat against us because this is a team that makes it easy for no opponent. We have become very regular and we nearly always manage to win the games that we have to win and sometimes we even spring surprises in games for which we're not the favourites. We have the technical quality and the mental determination to aim high in a World Cup.

So, can Italian fans start dreaming?
Inevitably, teams like Brazil, Argentina, Germany and Spain start on the front row of the grid, while we are a bit behind them. But we're Italy; everybody has to be worried by us.

How far can Italy go this time?
Anything from the quarter-finals on and it will have been a good World Cup for us. In the end, as always, it depends on the draw and what teams you meet.

Describe the make-up of this Italy...
Well, in defence, Chiellini is our armoured carrier, Bonucci is the playmaker and Barzagli represents continuity. Paletta is a surprise for me, he did really well on his debut against Spain [in March]. I didn't expect him to be so calm and sure of himself. As for our midfield, well Pirlo is a genius, there's nothing more to say. De Rossi is totally solid, while Marchisio is your classic utility player. Thiago Motta adds weight and substance, Verratti is the future and the present, Candreva is very adaptable...and Parolo represents a breath of fresh air. Finally, the attack – Mario [Balotelli] knows that we are right behind him trying to set him up for the definitive consecration. Brazil represents a huge opportunity and he won't waste it. Cassano is pure fantasy at work, Cerci is strength allied to unpredictablility and Insigne is an acrobat. As for Immobile, well he has had a remarkable season ending up as the leading goalscorer in Serie A.

Old hand...Buffon has no intentions of retiring from international football

Has this been your best season since your 2010 back operation?
For three seasons now I've been playing well, silencing the doubters who were understandably sceptical about me making a complete recovery. Here I am at 36, still playing at a very high level, and that is a terrific feeling.

At 36, is experience more important than quick reflexes?
What matters is your motivation. Your reflexes slow down. At my age, you don't improve anymore so it is better to cut back on various technical training exercises [on the pitch] and concentrate on avoiding injuries, concentrate on what you eat and do more work in the gym.

> "We have the technical quality and the mental determination to aim high in a World Cup"

Will there be anything "unexpected" for you in Brazil?
Maybe a sudden change in the trajectory of a shot because that is something that happens a lot with today's light balls, especially when you go off your line to take a high ball off someone's head. I would say that in today's football, the best goalkeepers are the guys who block a shot rather than hold on to it.

What fellow goalkeepers have you admired?
Guys like Seba Rossi and Peter Schmeichel were simply audacious. Peruzzi was explosive, Marchegiani was elegant, Antonioli and Pagliuca were pure class, while Toldo and Van Der Sar had terrific reflexes.

What strikers have given you most problems?
[Brazilian] Ronaldo, Cristiano Ronaldo, Messi and, above all, Christian Vieri.

How important is coach Cesare Prandelli for this group of players?
He is a balanced, rational man. With his way of being and his sensibility, he has gone out of his way to interact with people and the response has been a renewed enthusiasm for the national team.

Will you retire from the national team after the World Cup?
I will never give up on the national team, the only way would be if the coach decided that I wasn't up to the job anymore, a judgement that I would accept without causing problems. In a year's time, I will be getting myself ready for Euro 2016.

The SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
Gianluigi Buffon (Juventus), **Mattia Perin** (Genoa), **Salvatore Sirigu** (Paris Saint-Germain, Fra)

DEFENDERS
Ignazio Abate (Milan), **Andrea Barzagli** (Juventus), **Leonardo Bonucci** (Juventus), **Giorgio Chiellini** (Juventus), **Matteo Darmian** (Torino), **Mattia De Sciglio** (Milan), **Gabriel Paletta** (Parma)

MIDFIELDERS
Alberto Aquilani (Fiorentina), **Antonio Candreva** (Lazio), **Daniele De Rossi** (Roma), **Claudio Marchisio** (Juventus), **Thiago Motta** (PSG, Fra), **Marco Parolo** (Parma), **Andrea Pirlo** (Juventus), **Marco Verratti** (PSG, Fra)

FORWARDS
Mario Balotelli (Milan), **Antonio Cassano** (Parma, *left*), **Alessio Cerci** (Torino), **Ciro Immobile** (Dortmund, Ger), **Lorenzo Insigne** (Napoli)

Bad break for Montolivo

Milan midfielder Riccardo Montolivo (*right*) suffered a broken leg in a warm-up friendly against the Republic of Ireland and misses out, as does Fiorentina striker Giuseppe Rossi, who failed to fully recover from damaged knee ligaments.

Ciro Immobile, who made his debut against Spain in March and joined Borussia Dortmund from Torino in June, is included, along with Mario Balotelli, who was racially abused at the Italy training centre ahead of leaving for Brazil.

Ivory Coast

Arthur Boka

What do you make of your World Cup group?
We are in a hard group, that's for sure, but perhaps not as tough as we had at the last two World Cups, where we had Argentina in 2006, and Brazil and Portugal in 2010. But that doesn't mean we can take anything for granted. We're well aware that all the World Cup games are difficult and that we will need to concentrate hard. I wouldn't say it's easy, but we have a really good chance to get into the knockout rounds.

It is surely the final outing for a generation of Ivorian players who have considerable experience?
This is the last chance for many of us, that's for sure. We're all getting a lot older, which is not much fun! We've had many good players over the years and this is the chance of a lifetime. We tried everything we could at the last two World Cups and we've given everything at the African Nations Cups that we've competed in but we didn't get the breaks. I think we all realise that this is a great opportunity.

> "I wouldn't say it's easy, but we have a really good chance to get into the knockout rounds"

In the Nations Cup, the Ivorians always seem to choke with success close at hand. Is this a psychological issue that hangs over the team?
Yes it's true and it's a problem. We can't say why this happens, but we have to accept it and approach it together as a team. Maybe it is something with the African teams that they lose focus at times, especially when they are playing well. We realise it is a problem, we are not sure where it comes from. We have to try and be more consistent.

Do you feel any extra pressure as Africa's top-ranked team?
Yes, for sure. The last World Cup was not great for the continent, even though it was being hosted in Africa. We need to change that. We're a big team in Africa and we have to show that we can also compete internationally. We need to show that African teams are as good as all the other top teams at the World Cup. Africa hasn't had as much success as perhaps it has been capable of at past World Cups.

How important is Drogba to the team?
He is important, of course. He's our captain and a huge player. I see him as an icon. He's our best player.

Your contract with Stuttgart ends this summer, so what is the future for you?
I've had a great seven years in the Bundesliga and I've learnt a lot. I've played in France too, at Strasbourg, which was also a great experience. I'm at the end of my contract so I will see what to do next. I hope there will be some options for me after the World Cup. Maybe the best for me would be to go and try something else. I'd like to play in a league somewhere else at the same level where I can try and set myself some new ambitions. As yet I've had no offers but we'll see what happens.

Interview by Mark Gleeson

Regular...Boka has played at every major tournament since 2006

The SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
Boubacar Barry (Lokeren, Blg), **Sylvain Gbohouo** (Sewe Sport), **Sayouba Mande** (Stabaek, Nor)

DEFENDERS
Jean-Daniel Akpa-Akpro (Toulouse, Fra), **Serge Aurier** (Toulouse, Fra), **Sol Bamba** (Trabzonspor, Tur), **Arthur Boka** (Stuttgart, Ger), **Constant Djakpa** (Ein Frankfurt, Ger), **Kolo Toure** (Liverpool, Eng), **Ousmane, Viera** (Caykur Rizespor, Tur), **Didier Zokora** (Trabzonspor, Tur)

MIDFIELDERS
Mathis Bolly (Fortuna Dusseldorf, Ger), **Serey Die** (Basle, Swi), **Ismael Diomande** (Saint-Etienne, Fra), **Max Gradel** (Saint-Etienne, Fra), **Cheik Tiote** (Newcastle United, Eng), **Yaya Toure** (Manchester City, Eng), **Didier Ya Konan** (Hanover, Ger)

FORWARDS
Wilfried Bony (Swansea City, Eng), **Didier Drogba** (Galatasaray, Tur), **Gervinho** (Roma, Ita), **Salomon Kalou** (Lille, Fra), **Giovanni Sio** (Basle, Swi, *right*)

Big names left out

Doumbia...failed to make the cut

Galatasaray right-back Emmanuel Eboue, Bastia midfielder Romaric and CSKA Moscow striker Seydou Doumbia were among those left out of the final 23. Monaco striker Lacina Traore, who spent much of the season injured while on loan to Everton, was also left out. "I've known a few difficult moments in my two years with the Ivory Coast, but today has been by far the most difficult day," said coach Sabri Lamouchi when he announced his squad.

Japan

Hotaru Yamaguchi

Q&A

How would you describe your own style of play?
I run a lot. I give support across a wide area in both attack and defence. Also, I'm good at winning the ball one-on-one.

You also have good vision and pass well over distance...
That's a conscious thing. I always look for Yoichiro Kakitani [at club side Cerezo Osaka] as soon as I get the ball. I have been doing that since last year. The same goes for other long balls – looking for the space behind Diego Forlan, for example.

And how is your combination with Forlan, now that you've been playing together for a couple of months?
It's very good now. He is superb at getting in behind and I find I'm playing a lot more through passes this year because of it.

You became your club's captain this year at the age of 23. Do you have a problem giving orders with a player like Forlan around?
No, it isn't that hard. But being captain has made me pay more attention to all the players around me.

What is it like to be playing at the World Cup finals?
I have dreamed of playing at the World Cup since I was little. My earliest memory of it was 2002 in Japan and South Korea. Ronaldinho's long kick [against England] was the most impressive thing for me.

When did you start playing?
In my third year at primary school.

And who were your idols?
Nobody then. When I saw the World Cup though, I thought Ronaldinho was amazing.

And who do you most admire now?
Now, it's Arturo Vidal.

When did you first start thinking that you might play for Japan?
I didn't think it at all until only recently.

You came into the team at a difficult time, just after the Confederations Cup last year. How has the team grown during the past year?
I think we have got a lot better at connecting defensively as a team than we were at the Confederations Cup.

And what have you brought to the team? Has coach Alberto Zaccheroni given you any special instructions?
Well, I think I was chosen for my playing strengths, the things I do. The manager hasn't really asked for anything special, but he places a lot of emphasis on always keeping the balance in the team.

How would you compare yourself to your rivals for a place, such as Makoto Hasebe or Yasuhito Endo?
What I offer is the ability to win the ball by myself and cover in various positions, and I think that's why I'm being chosen.

What are Japan's biggest strengths?
The way we work together as a team for victory. I think Japan is very strong at that.

> "Honda and Kagawa are gifted, but perhaps we tend to rely a bit too much on them"

And weaknesses?
We can lose our shape a bit after conceding a goal. Also, because we have players like Honda and Kagawa up front who are amazingly gifted, perhaps we tend to rely a bit too much on them.

You like to join the attack as well. Does having Keisuke Honda, Shinji Kagawa and Shinji Okazaki in front of you cramp your style at all?
It is different. I go forward all the time at my club, but don't have so many chances to do that with the national team. The tendency is for the front three to do the attacking and we don't really need to come up from behind. At the World Cup, I think we'll have to change according to our opponent. If possible, though, I hope we can play attacking football.

Do you watch a lot of football on TV?
Yes, almost every day. Whenever I'm free, ever since I was little.

Cerezo Osaka have produced such players as Kagawa, Hiroshi Kiyotake and Takashi Inui. Do you want to follow them to Europe?
Yes, of course, I want to play abroad. I think Italy would suit my playing style. Of course, I'd like to have a go in somewhere like Spain as well.

What aspects of your game would you like to improve?
I want to improve the basic techniques. However much I run, when I see the pace of the Premier League, for example, I wonder whether I have the speed and accuracy for that.

Interview by Mike Plastow

The SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
Shuichi Gonda (FC Tokyo), **Eiji Kawashima** (Standard Liege, Blg), **Shusaku Nishikawa** (Urawa Red Diamonds)

DEFENDERS
Masahiko Inoha (Jubilo Iwata), **Yasuyuki Konno** (Gamba Osaka), **Masato Morishige** (FC Tokyo), **Yuto Nagatomo** (Internazionale, Ita, *top*), **Gotoku Sakai** (Stuttgart, Ger), **Hiroki Sakai** (Hanover, Ger), **Atsuto Uchida** (Schalke, Ger), **Maya Yoshida** (Southampton, Eng)

MIDFIELDERS
Toshihiro Aoyama (Sanfrecce Hiroshima), **Yasuhito Endo** (Gamba Osaka), **Makoto Hasebe** (E Frankfurt , Ger), **Keisuke Honda** (Milan, Ita), **Shinji Kagawa** (Man United, Eng), **Yoichiro Kakitani** (Cerezo Osaka, *middle*), **Hiroshi Kiyotake** (Nuremberg, Ger), **Manabu Saito** (Yokohama F Marinos, *bottom*), **Hotaru Yamaguchi** (Cerezo Osaka)

FORWARDS
Shinji Okazaki (Mainz, Ger), **Yoshito Okubo** (Kawasaki Frontale), **Yuya Osako** (1860 Munich, Ger)

Veteran striker gets the nod

The only real surprise in coach Alberto Zaccheroni's squad was the inclusion of Yoshito Okubo (*right*) of Kawasaki Frontale, who has only been picked once by the Italian.

The 31-year-old striker was last year's top scorer in the J.League, helping Kawasaki to a third-placed finish.

Mexico

Hector Moreno

How does the Mexico team feel going into the World Cup?
We are feeling pretty confident. It's been a different experience to what I was used to, because due to the lack of time to prepare I only met some of my team-mates for the first time at the end of May. But we are trying our best to recover that lost time and to get in the best possible shape.

Coach Miguel Herrera only had six months to prepare the team and he did a complete overhaul of the side. Do you feel that could be a disadvantage?
Not really. In the last few weeks before the finals, what the coach was trying to do was to simplify his system so the ones that hadn't played under him, like me, could feel more at ease and understand what he wants. Most of us have also played in similar systems to the one he wants to implement, with a five-man back line, so the process hasn't been that hard.

How could you describe Herrera?
I'm pleasantly surprised about how professional he is and how he has managed to build a good group in only a few weeks. He doesn't leave anything to chance and has a very strict eye for detail. We feel confident that his way is the right way and we will be ready.

With so little time, have you had the chance to analyse your rivals' styles?
Not really. At the moment we are completely focused on what we want to do and how are we going to do it. I know the coaches have watched quite a few games of our rivals and that they will let us know what we need to know. But at the moment, the most important thing for us is to be sure on what we are going to do in the game against Cameroon.

Calm..Moreno is a commanding presence at the heart of the Mexico defence

Do you consider the Cameroon game to be the most important for you in the World Cup?
Well, it's the first one, so you can say so. Obviously, starting with a victory would be a big boost, and losing it would be a shock, but that scenario doesn't even go through our minds. Actually, our idea is to beat Cameroon and then Brazil, so we don't have to decide our fate in the third game against Croatia.

In Mexico, people are quite obsessed with making it through the round of 16, which has been the limit for the team in the last five World Cups. Do you share that feeling?
Not at all. We are not thinking at all about an ideal result or different scenarios. We know what people want and we also know that we want to do our best. But we are focusing on winning that first match, and then the second, and then the third. I like the people to be ambitious but we have to remain focused. That's the only way we will be able to have a good World Cup.

Are you already feeling the pressure?
We know that we have a big responsibility upon our shoulders. But pressure? Not really. We are really excited and we know that the people expect a lot from us, but we also expect a lot from us, so we are on the same boat. We want to have a fantastic experience and to provide a fantastic experience to the fans, so we have no real pressure, but we know what is coming.

Individually, you have had some very good seasons in Spain with Espanyol, and have already stated that you want to move to a bigger club. Does that make this World Cup even more important for you?
It's hard to think that a World Cup could be more important than it actually is, but it's true that I know that having a good tournament will definitely help my chances of going to a bigger club. Personally, I would like to play in the Premier League, and I know that the eyes of the whole world will be upon us, so that motivates me even more to have a great performance.

Interview by Martin Del Palacio Langer

The SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
Jesus Corona (Cruz Azul), **Guillermo Ochoa** (Ajaccio, FRA), **Alfredo Talavera** (Toluca)

DEFENDERS
Paul Aguilar (America), **Miguel Layun** (America), **Rafael Marquez** (Leon), **Hector Moreno** (Espanyol, Spa), **Miguel Ponce** (Guadalajara, *right*), **Diego Reyes** (Porto, Por), **Francisco Rodriguez** (Cruz Azul), **Carlos Salcido** (Guadalajara)

MIDFIELDERS
Javier Aquino (Villarreal, Spa), **Isaac Brizuela** (Toluca), **Marco Fabian** (Cruz Azul), **Andres Guardado** (Leverkusen, Ger), **Hector Herrera** (Porto, Por), **Carlos Pena** (Leon), **Jose Juan Vazquez** (Leon)

FORWARDS
Oribe Peralta (America), **Javier Hernandez** (Manchester United, Eng), **Raul Jimenez** (America), **Alan Pulido** (Tigres), **Giovani Dos Santos** (Villarreal, Spa)

Vets travel to Brazil

Veteran defender Carlos Salcido (*right*), who went to the 2006 and 2010 World Cups but had not been involved since Miguel Herrera took charge, was named in the squad. Rafael Marquez, who will be competing at his fourth finals, is also included.

Leon midfielder Luis Montes was ruled out when he broke a leg two minutes after scoring in a 3-1 win over Ecuador in May. America midfielder Juan Carlos Medina was forced to pull out of the final 23 with an ankle injury.

Nigeria

Peter Odemwingie

Friends reunited... Odemwingie has made up with Nigeria coach Keshi

You have built bridges with coach Stephen Keshi and are back in the squad after your Twitter outburst when he dropped you three years ago...
I have been speaking with the coach, it's the only right thing to do. I had to be humble and make a step forward towards my senior colleagues. You can't continue to stay in an angry state of mind. Staying in that state, it's not the right thing to do. It's never helpful for anyone. I have let go of things from the past. It's not a do-or-die matter. I'm taking things really easy. Being a father now, things are different.

So why did you come out so strongly?
It was very disappointing at the time, it was hard to accept it. I had a strong feeling that it was Nigeria's time to win the African Nations Cup. I was as frustrated as any other player who was left out.

What is your relationship with Keshi like now?
It's not about people, it's always about the country. We're all defending the colours of our nation. Keshi can do without me at the World Cup and my life will go on as well, but the most important thing is mutual respect. I know how he does things and how he wants things done and vice versa.

Can you add something to the World Cup squad?
It's not a question of whether I believe I will strengthen the team, I will be a useful player for the team and I want to be there. It's a team that has been doing well over the past year, but every team needs depth. The World Cup is about 23 players, not just 11. The matches come every few days, there can be injuries and other things. I am 100 per cent sure I would be a great addition to our national team. I'm in good form physically and psychologically.

> "You can't continue to stay in an angry state of mind... it's never helpful for anyone"

Any regrets as you watched Keshi's team win the African title last year?
I thought we could win it; Cameroon and Egypt were not there, Ghana were struggling and a few players were missing so I felt it was our chance. But I didn't make the squad. And it would have been the tournament that I would have scored goals at more than before because I had moved to the Premier League and improved as a player – especially in front of goal. But I'm very happy that we won it in the end because many names that had not been in the frame for the squad for the past 10 years were there and they helped the team lift the trophy.

Do you feel you need to make up for that missed chance at the World Cup?
When we talk about the generation that just passed, we wish we won more for Nigeria. We won silver at the 2008 Olympics, it's good but it's not gold. We won three bronze medals in the Nations Cup, which was still good but the frustrations were there.

Interview by James Cannon

The SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
Chigozie Agbim (Gombe United), **Austin Ejide** (Hapoel Be'er Sheva, Isr), **Vincent Enyeama** (Lille, Fra)

DEFENDERS
Efe Ambrose (Celtic, Sco), **Elderson Echiejile** (Monaco, Fra), **Azubuike Egwuekwe** (Warri Wolves), **Godfrey Oboabona** (Rizespor, Tur), **Kunle Odunlami** (Sunshine Stars), **Kenneth Omeruo** (Chelsea, Eng), **Juwon Oshaniwa** (Ashdod, Isr), **Joseph Yobo** (Fenerbahce, Tur)

MIDFIELDERS
Ramon Azeez (Almeria, Spa), **Michael Babatunde** (Volyn Lutsk, Ukr), **Reuben Gabriel** (Waasland-Beveren, Blg), **John Obi Mikel** (Chelsea, Eng), **Ogenyi Onazi** (Lazio, Ita)

FORWARDS
Shola Ameobi (Newcastle United, Eng), **Emmanuel Emenike** (Fenerbahce, Tur), **Victor Moses** (Chelsea, Eng), **Ahmed Musa** (CSKA Moscow, Rus), **Uche Nwofor** (VVV Venlo, Hol), **Peter Odemwingie** (Stoke City, Eng), **Michael Uchebo** (Cercle Brugge, Blg)

Back in favour

Peter Odemwingie is back in favour with coach Stephen Keshi after they fell out following his omission from the side that won the African Nations Cup last year.

Brown Ideye and Fegor Ogude are among the winning squad from 2013 that failed to make it to Brazil, along with Sunday Mba (*left*) who scored the winner in the Final.

Portugal

Rafa

You've come a long way in a short space of time...
It's true that four years ago, when I was playing for Alverca, I didn't think I'd get this far. At the time I was just playing for fun, I never expected to be in this company. But now I'm here I'm going to help in any way I can. I was very happy to hear the coach's words of praise, but without hard work you can't do anything. I have to keep giving my all.

Young gun...at the age of 21, Rafa is the youngest player in the Portugal squad

People are tipping you to be one of the young stars of the tournament...
It's true I'm the youngest player in the squad and I think it's important for the national team to renew itself, but that's the coach's job. He selected me and for now the only thing that matters is the World Cup. My dream is to go as far as possible. If I end up being a revelation, all the better, but it's what the team does that matters.

Do you feel under pressure to succeed in Brazil?
Pressure is a good thing, and this squad is perfectly prepared for all situations. Playing under pressure is what makes a player develop. I feel great. I've been rewarded for a positive season. I was a surprise for many people, but I'm going to be ready to play in every game.

> Playing under pressure is what makes a player develop

Were you surprised to get the call from Paulo Bento?
Everyone was expecting Quaresma to be called up and I was surprised, especially as I only had one cap against Cameroon. But I don't feel I'm a replacement for him, or anyone else. I'm here to help the squad.

How have you found life with your new team-mates?
I've been made to feel really welcome, which is important for a young player like me, and it was easy for me to adapt to the new environment. I hope I can improve my game and help when called upon. This is an excellent opportunity for me.

What's your best position?
I prefer to play in the centre, but the coach will decide. In the middle I find it easier, it's where I've always played, but I can also play on the flanks if the coach wants that.

Can Portugal win the World Cup?
But what I want above all is for the team to have a good World Cup. Anything on top of that in individual terms is just a bonus.

Interview by Tom Kundert

The SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
Beto (Sevilla, Spa), **Eduardo** (Braga), **Rui Patricio** (Sporting Lisbon)

DEFENDERS
Andre Almeida (Benfica), **Bruno Alves** (Fenerbahce, Tur), **Fabio Coentrao** (Real Madrid, Spa), **Ricardo Costa** (Valencia, Spa), **Luis Neto** (Zenit, Rus), **Pepe** (Real Madrid, Spa), **Joao Pereira** (Valencia, Spa, *top*)

MIDFIELDERS
Ruben Amorim (Benfica), **William Carvalho** (Sporting Lisbon, *bottom*), **Raul Meireles** (Fenerbahce, Tur, *middle*), **Joao Moutinho** (Monaco, Fra), **Miguel Veloso** (Dynamo Kiev, Ukr)

FORWARDS
Hugo Almeida (Besiktas, Tur), **Eder** (Braga), **Nani** (Manchester United, Eng), **Helder Postiga** (Lazio, Ita), **Cristiano Ronaldo** (Real Madrid, Spa), **Rafa** (Braga), **Varela** (Porto), **Vieirinha** (Wolfsburg, Ger)

No place for Quaresma

Quaresma...missed the cut

Porto's Ricardo Quaresma, who was named in the provisional squad of 30, failed to make the final 23, along with goalkeeper Anthony Lopes, defenders Vitorino Antunes and Rolando, midfielders Andre Gomes and Joao Mario, and striker Ivan Cavaleiro.

Russia

Roman Shirokov

Does the fact that this World Cup is being staged in Brazil make it particularly special for you?
No. Brazil may be something "out of this world" for many people in terms of football, but not for me. I have always preferred the European style of game, which is closer to me. However, I will surely enjoy the aura of the planet's biggest football tournament. And I am naturally looking forward to experiencing the famous local colour of Brazil!

> I have always preferred the European style of game

Does that mean Brazilian players were not your childhood heroes? What European players did you like best?
No, no. Of course, I have always admired Romario, Ronaldo and Rivaldo. My favourite European players of all times are Zidane, Beckham and Lampard.

What would you consider to be a successful tournament for Russia?
The minimum task for Russia in Brazil is to do well in the qualifying group and get through to the next stage. Reaching the quarter-finals would be a good result for us. And I would rate winning medals as very good!

What do you make of your group?
All in all, the draw was good for us. We have got a group where it is hard to single out one team, although many people say it is Belgium. I would rather say that Belgium and South Korea are both equally strong and extremely dangerous. And we play Algeria in our last group game. It is common knowledge that the last game may bring any kind of surprise. In this sense, I would add Algeria to my dangerous list too.

Who do you think will win the tournament?
I think Germany, Spain, Brazil and Argentina have the best chances of winning the title.

Interview by Victor Gusev

Danger...South Korea should not be underestimated, says Shirokov

Goal...Shirokov celebrates scoring during a World Cup qualifier in Azerbaijan

The SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
Igor Akinfeev (CSKA Moscow), **Yury Lodygin** (Zenit), **Sergei Ryzhikov** (Rubin Kazan)

DEFENDERS
Vasily Berezutsky (CSKA), **Vladimir Granat** (Dynamo Moscow), **Sergei Ignashevich** (CSKA Moscow), **Dmitry Kombarov** (Spartak), **Alexei Kozlov** (Dynamo Moscow), **Andrei Semenov** (Terek Grozny), **Georgy Shchennikov** (CSKA), **Andrei Yeshchenko** (Anzhi)

MIDFIELDERS
Igor Denisov (Dynamo Moscow), **Alan Dzagoev** (CSKA), **Viktor Faizulin** (Zenit), **Denis Glushakov** (Spartak), **Oleg Shatov** (Zenit), **Roman Shirokov** (Krasnodar), **Yury Zhirkov** (Dynamo Moscow)

FORWARDS
Alexei Ionov (Dynamo), **Maxim Kanunnikov** (Amkar Perm), **Alexander Kerzhakov** (Zenit), **Alexander Kokorin** (Dynamo), **Alexander Samedov** (Lokomotiv)

Home-based selection

Fabio Capello's squad all play their club football in the Russian Premier League, with 31-year-old Alexander Kerzhakov (*right*) – who went to the 2002 finals – the only player with previous World Cup experience.

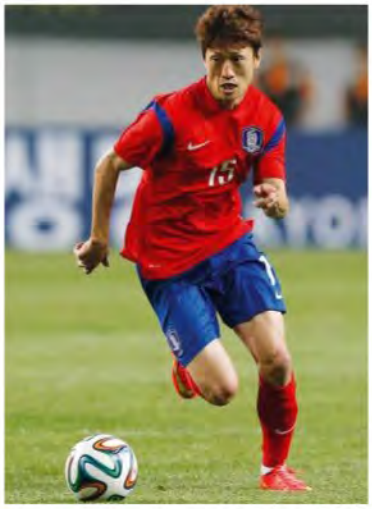
Lokomotiv Moscow midfielder Dmitry Tarasov, who was sidelined earlier this year with a cruciate ligament injury, was left out as he was deemed unlikely to be fully fit in time.

South Korea

Lee Chung-yong

The World Cup is here...
I am feeling good after the end of the season in England and there are no fitness issues. If I am picked to play for the national team it will be my second World Cup. In a team that is stronger than it was four years ago, I want to play a bigger role and try to help the team as much as I can.

What do you think of the draw?
I think that the result of the World Cup draw is not especially bad, but our



opponents are good teams and they have lots of players in good and strong leagues in Europe. It will not be easy, but then we will be ready for the challenge. It will be an exciting summer for the World Cup and I hope for Korean football.

Can you get to the knockout stage?
We're a very good team that can compete in Brazil. It is not about personal targets. We are all focused on giving the best performance that we can. Then we have to think about getting out of the group. We can think later about what comes next.

Experienced..with over 50 caps, Lee is a key player in the Korean midfield

This is your second World Cup...
I don't remember much of what happened four years ago. It was all a bit of a blur. This time around, I have had time to think more about what is going on and my role in the team and how to help us get good results.

Is having a number of players active in Europe important for South Korea?
Wherever you play in Europe you can feel lots of different things and have lots of new experiences. There, the best players in the world play and you can experience what it is like to play against them on a regular basis. There's no doubt that, for a team like South Korea, it really helps our chances at a major sporting event like the World Cup if we have lots of players who have experience of playing in Europe for good teams in good leagues. The World Cup is a good opportunity for us to show just what South Korea can do and it is also a good opportunity for us to get good results. You can see with the squad we have that, compared to the age of the team, we have a lot of experience – and not just at World Cups – as the younger players won bronze at the 2012 Olympics and defeated some good teams along the way, so that will help them. We know that it is going to be difficult in Brazil but we want to give it our best.

Interview by John Duerden

The SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
Jung Sung-ryung (Suwon Bluewings), **Kim Seung-gyu** (Ulsan Hyundai), **Lee Bum-young** (Busan IPark)

DEFENDERS
Hong Jeong-ho (Augsburg, Ger, *right*), **Hwang Seok-ho** (Sanfrecce Hiroshima, Jap), **Kim Chang-soo** (Kashiwa Reysol, Jap), **Kim Young-gwon** (Guangzhou Evergrande, Chn), **Kwak Tae-hwi** (Al Hilal, Sau), **Lee Yong** (Ulsan Hyundai), **Park Joo-ho** (Mainz, Ger), **Yun Suk-young** (Queens Park Rangers, Eng)

MIDFIELDERS
Ha Dae-sung (Beijing Guoan, Chn), **Han Kook-young** (Kashiwa Reysol, Jap), **Ji Dong-won** (Augsburg, Ger), **Ki Sung-yueng** (Swansea City, Eng), **Kim Bo-kyung** (Cardiff City, Eng), **Lee Chung-yong** (Bolton Wanderers, Eng), **Park Jong-woo** (Guangzhou R&F, Chn), **Son Heung-min** (Leverkusen, Ger)

FORWARDS
Kim Shin-wook (Ulsan Hyundai), **Koo Ja-cheol** (Mainz, Ger), **Lee Keun-ho** (Sangju Sangmu), **Park Chu-young** (Arsenal, Eng)

Youth gets a chance

Park Joo-ho (*right*) was drafted in after first-choice left-back Kim Jin-su failed to recover from an ankle injury. At 32, centre-back Kwak Tae-hwi is the only player

aged over 30 in a youthful squad selected by coach Hong Myung-bo. "It's a young team, but our players don't lack in experience," says Hong.

"They all play in competitive leagues. This may not be Korea's greatest World Cup squad ever assembled but I can assure you we will work hard to be one."

Spain

Xavi

You changed your mind about retiring from the national team...
When I told Vicente [Del Bosque] I wanted to retire from the national team at the end of Euro 2012, he said to me: "You're an important person here and I am counting on you to go to Brazil. You will be important to us."

But this will be your last World Cup?
The Brazil World Cup will be my last one. I don't see myself in Russia in 2018 at the age of 38.

How is your fitness?
I feel better now than in the last two seasons. I know that I have to save my strength, but never have I felt so good. I'm more mature, physically better.

Who have been the most important coaches in your career?
I've enjoyed playing under all the coaches I've had in my career, but if I had to single out two, I'd go for Luis Aragones and Pep Guardiola. They have been very important for me. Aragones always used to say that we were not so good in our physical conditioning, but on a technical level we were among the best five teams in the world. He was very human, very close to people. Footballers, like everyone else, appreciate that; sincere people who look you in the eye when speaking to you. Guardiola will always be important for me. He was important when I was a child and also when he coached me professionally.

What about Del Bosque?
Vicente Del Bosque is the most human person I've ever come across in a dressing room. He always tells me that football should be played by 11 midfielders. It's an idea I also heard from Guardiola.

What does the future hold for you when you retire?
I love football and I want to stay in this world. I don't see myself working in an office. What do you want me to do? Economics? Social and political debates are too complicated for me.

> "Del Bosque always tells me that football should be played by 11 midfielders"

Do you ever feel you should score more goals?
I'm more annoyed giving the ball away than missing a goal chance. When I lose possession, I say to myself: "Damn, I should have been more responsible."

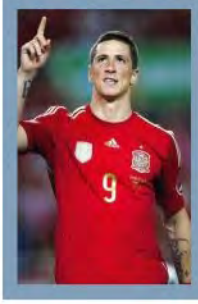
So football is about more than just simply winning?
Mourinho never stops saying that he's the "Special One" because he's won this and that in a number of countries. But who remembers the Inter team which became European champions? No one.

Some people say you are the greatest Spanish player of all time...
There are many others you could talk of: Puyol, Ramos, Villa, Raul, Hierro, Guardiola, Luis Suarez, Di Stefano. Why shouldn't Casillas be considered the best Spaniard of all time? He has won as many titles as I have. I'm proud just to be cited in this debate.

How do you feel as a Catalan playing for Spain?
I've never made a political comment in my life. I don't want to be involved in that. I'm a footballer. I've always had a great desire to play for the Spanish national team. What's wrong with that? It makes no difference if a player is Catalan, Basque or Andalucian. The ultimate in a career is to play for a national team at a World Cup. Mixing football and politics is a serious mistake.

Interview by So Foot/ESM

Final farewell... this World Cup will be the last for Xavi



The SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
Iker Casillas (Real Madrid), **David De Gea** (Manchester United, Eng), **Pepe Reina** (Liverpool, Eng)

DEFENDERS
Jordi Alba (Barcelona), **Raul Albiol** (Napoli, Ita), **Cesar Azpilicueta** (Chelsea, Eng), **Juanfran** (Atletico Madrid), **Javi Martinez** (Bayern Munich, Ger), **Gerard Pique** (Barcelona), **Sergio Ramos** (Real Madrid)

MIDFIELDERS
Xabi Alonso (Real Madrid), **Sergio Busquets** (Barcelona), **Santi Cazorla** (Arsenal), **Cesc Fabregas** (Barcelona), **Andres Iniesta** (Barcelona), **Koke** (Atletico Madrid), **Juan Mata** (Manchester United), **David Silva** (Manchester City), **Xavi** (Barcelona)

FORWARDS
Diego Costa (Atletico Madrid, *above*), **Pedro** (Barcelona), **Fernando Torres** (Chelsea, Eng, *left*), **David Villa** (New York City, USA)

Del Bosque takes a risk

Strikers Diego Costa and Fernando Torres both found places in Vicente Del Bosque's squad, despite injury and form concerns respectively.

Uncapped goalkeeper David De Gea was preferred to Real Madrid's Diego Lopez as the replacement for third-choice Victor Valdes, who is out with a serious knee injury.

Bayern Munich midfielder Thiago Alcantara, who was in the 30, missed out and will undergo surgery on torn knee ligaments.

Alcantara...going under the knife

Switzerland

Granit Xhaka

What do you make of your group?
It's a group in which everything is possible. We must not underestimate the likes of Ecuador and Honduras. And as for France, we know all about their strengths.

What are Switzerland's goals for this tournament?
Our first objective is to reach the knockout phase. Then we'll take it from there.

You've just finished your second season at Monchengladbach. How are you enjoying it ?
I'm not the only one at the club who has been having great fun. The whole team and the fans in the stadium are happy with the way we play football: really attractive football rather than just counter-attacking. We've found a good balance. The four in attack score the goals, while the remaining six, including me, hold the fort behind. Only joking.

How have you developed as a player at Gladbach?
I'm playing a lot simpler than I was last season. I used to try to be all over the pitch and that was a mistake. Now, I've a better understanding of what I have to do and look to stick to the coach's instructions.

You've opted to play for Switzerland but your roots are Kosovan...
All my relatives live in Kosovo. I'd like to think a lot of people there are proud of me. During the winter break and in the summer, I drive to Pristina to visit my folks. I need to do it. I was born and brought up in Switzerland. This is also my home.

How did it feel being booed by Albanian fans in the qualifiers?
When you are treated as a traitor, that's a hard word. Most Albanian fans respect me, but to call me a traitor is too much. Especially considering my family history.

Your father was imprisoned on political grounds in the former Yugoslavia...
He went to prison for three-and-a-half years because of his convictions. We do talk about it. I need to know what went on.

You have said that you would like to play in England one day...
I think Premier League football would suit me. Playing over there is an intensely exciting thought.

Interview by Kicker/ESM

Battler... Xhaka wins a header in a World Cup qualifier against Slovenia

Big impression...Swiss coach Ottmar Hitzfeld has called Xhaka the "young Schweinsteiger"

The SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
Diego Benaglio (Wolfsburg, Ger), **Roman Burki** (Grasshoppers), **Yann Sommer** (Basle)

DEFENDERS
Johan Djourou (Arsenal, Eng), **Michael Lang** (Grasshoppers), **Stephan Lichtsteiner** (Juventus, Ita), **Ricardo Rodriguez** (Wolfsburg, Ger), **Fabian Schar** (Basle), **Philippe Senderos** (Valencia, Spa), **Steve Von Bergen** (Young Boys), **Reto Ziegler** (Sassuolo, Ita)

MIDFIELDERS
Tranquillo Barnetta (Eintracht Frankfurt, Ger), **Valon Behrami** (Napoli, Ita), **Blerim Dzemaili** (Napoli, Ita), **Gelson Fernandes** (Freiburg, Ger), **Gokhan Inler** (Napoli, Ita, *middle*), **Xherdan Shaqiri** (Bayern Munich, Ger), **Valentin Stocker** (Basle)

FORWARDS
Josip Drmic (Bayer Leverkusen, Ger, *bottom*), **Mario Gavranovic** (Zurich), **Admir Mehmedi** (Freiburg, Ger, *top*), **Haris Seferovic** (Real Sociedad, Spa), **Granit Xhaka** (Borussia Monchengladbach, Ger)

Retiring coach plans for future

Ottmar Hitzfeld, who is set to retire after the finals, is looking to the future, going for a mixture of youth and experience, and selecting just one player, Steve Von Bergen, who is over 30. Fulham midfielder Pajtim Kasami and Bayer Leverkusen striker Eren Derdiyok miss out, but uncapped Roman Burki gets his chance as third-choice keeper due to Marco Wolfli's injury. Injury concerns over Eintracht Frankfurt midfielder Pirmin Schwegler ruled him out, but worries over the fitness of Tranquillo Barnetta, Diego Benaglio and Xherdan Shaqiri did not prevent their inclusion. Striker Josip Drmic was named in the squad 24 hours after leaving Nuremberg for Bayer Leverkusen.

Uruguay

Diego Lugano

Football is imbedded in most Uruguayans' identity, right?
When we came back home from South Africa the whole country was in the streets. Montevideo has 1.5 million inhabitants and there were 800,000 out there. I saw grandfathers holding grandsons by the hand, not talking, just weeping with joy, all without political flags. That month the birth rate rose in Uruguay – I'm not kidding, there are official statistics – consumer purchasing increased, and all because the people were happy. That has a lot to do with the size of the country and the place football has in our society.

Did you think, at one point, that Uruguay might not qualify?
Yes, after the match with Chile [a 2-0 defeat in Santiago in March 2013] reality dictated that we had to win four of the remaining five qualifiers to get to the play-off, something almost impossible. I think only Uruguay are capable of recovering in a qualifying series like that.

Failing to qualify would have been a huge blow...
No doubt – for Uruguay it's fundamental to go to the World Cups. Not getting there would have been a tremendous failure, the biggest of our lives. The key match was away to Venezuela. They were three points ahead of us and playing the most important match in their history. We were groggy from a run of poor results and when things aren't going your way there is a negative climate around you. We had to do everything we could to turn that negative current into motivation – we appealed to our pride and carried it off [1-0]. My chest swells with pride when I think of it, the team focused incredibly when all the pressure was on us. I've been all over the world and, sincerely, I don't think there is any other race of players with that kind of commitment. You can play well or awfully, but that loyalty to the colours, to team-mates and fans is unique and can save you in moments like that.

So you were afraid of not making it?
Sure, I was afraid, we were walking on the edge of a precipice. Anyway, the brave are those who feel fear and press on.

What was Uruguay's goal when you went to the last World Cup?
The principal objective was, like now, to get through the first phase. It doesn't change anything going as seeds or South American champions. If we think that way, we'll start to lose. But we know Uruguay are a very competitive team who can beat Spain, Brazil or Argentina but can also lose against Iran or Honduras. Our first objective is to win the first match against Costa Rica which will be very hard. They can't forget the play-off they lost to us in 2009. From there you have to cement your passage to the second phase. We landed in a very tough group. Three world champions in the same group had never happened before, but if it's a matter of making history Uruguay had to be in it.

> "I think only Uruguay are capable of recovering in a qualifying series like we did"

Tough competitor... the all-action Lugano battles for the ball against Japan

Do you feel pressure to not fall below the standards you set in 2010?
We make very big demands of ourselves and have a strong will. That's the biggest pressure, what we put on ourselves, because we're coming from four or five very good years, apart from the second half of 2012 which was catastrophic and pushed us way down in the qualifying group. And there's more pressure with the finals being played in Brazil. We have a history and a mystique that pushes us.

Did you swear a lot when you watched the draw?
Quite a bit! My first reaction was anger. It had been 40 years since we were last seeded at a World Cup and it turns out we get two world champions in our group. On top of that we're the seeds doing the most travelling, to Sao Paulo, Fortaleza and Natal. But as I cooled down I thought, "look what tremendous matches we have the chance to play and enjoy at a World Cup". It's a lovely, spectacular challenge. That's how to look at it.

Your group rivals seem to have a

Rising high... Lugano in action against Chile in a World Cup qualifier

Leader...Lugano captained Uruguay to fourth place at the 2010 World Cup

Experience... Lugano could win his 100th international cap at the World Cup

The SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
Rodrigo Munoz (Libertad, Par), **Fernando Muslera** (Galatasaray, Tur), **Martin Silva** (Vasco Da Gama, Bra)

DEFENDERS
Martin Caceres (Juventus, Ita), **Sebastian Coates** (Liverpool, Eng), **Jorge Fucile** (Porto, Por), **Jose Maria Gimenez** (At Madrid, Spa), **Diego Godin** (At Madrid, Spa), **Diego Lugano** (WBA, Eng), **Maxi Pereira** (Benfica, Por)

MIDFIELDERS
Egidio Arevalo Rios (Morelia, Mex), **Walter Gargano** (Parma, Ita), **Alvaro Gonzalez** (Lazio, Ita), **Nicolas Lodeiro** (Botafogo, Bra), **Alvaro Pereira** (Sao Paulo, Bra), **Diego Perez** (Bologna, Ita), **Gaston Ramirez** (S'thampton, Eng), **Cristian Rodriguez** (At Madrid, Spa)

FORWARDS
Edinson Cavani (Paris Saint-Germain, Fra), **Diego Forlan** (Cerezo Osaka, Jap), **Abel Hernandez** (Palermo, Ita), **Cristian Stuani** (Espanyol, Spa), **Luis Suarez** (Liverpool, Eng)

Suarez given time

Despite undergoing keyhole surgery on May 22 after damaging the meniscus in his left knee, Luis Suarez (*right*) has been included in Oscar Tabarez's

final squad. Missing, however, are Palmeiras midfielder Sebastian Eguren and Lanus defender Alejandro Silva who were cut from the 25-man provisional selection.

respect for Uruguay they might not have had four years ago...
Sure, one of the things that gratifies me, watching the draw on English television, was that when the European team was going to come out of the hat for our group, the commentators said: "Not here, not here"! And then they lamented the outcome. We must get back to the compact Uruguay of South Africa where we went nearly four matches without conceding a goal, then bet on quality players to settle matches for us.

Do you see any team above the rest?
Spain and Germany as teams are a step ahead, then Brazil as hosts. Del Bosque gave us all a big hand by taking Diego Costa away from Brazil – he looked like the part missing for them to complete their team. Then, if Messi is in top form Argentina are also great candidates, and Portugal with Cristiano Ronaldo.

Will Uruguay's shock triumph over Brazil in the 1950 World Cup Final weigh on the hosts?
Nothing like that will ever happen again. Uruguay went to that World Cup after a two-year players' union strike, nearly arriving without a coach. Brazil only needed a draw, and the Uruguayan directors left before the match thinking it would be a rout. It couldn't be repeated.

Does it weigh on you, as captain of the current side?
No way. On the contrary, it's a mystique. Only Uruguay has that history, which is why I tell my team-mates it can push us to be a bit more than what we are. We view it as a privilege given us by the greats of yesteryear. It's a plus no one else has.

But Brazilians are happy you are going to the World Cup?
They love us in Brazil, among other things because we're competitive, battle-hardened. We'd eat their liver if we had to! We've beaten them sometimes, but we've always been respectful. But if we think we have a divine right to repeat the victory of 1950 because we're Uruguayan, we're making a mistake.

Such is the respect for you at home that even thieves admit a mistake!
Well, I was lucky because it happened when the national team were doing well. We went out for a meal with friends before the Copa America. I left my bag in the car with documents, money and a computer in it. When I was told it had been stolen, I said "I'll report it later" and stayed at the dinner. But it appears the thieves, saw the bag was mine, so called a TV channel to say they'd left it in such and such a place. There was nothing missing from it, not the money, nor the computer. Incredible!

Interview by Diego Borinsky

USA

Tim Howard

In charge...Howard clears against Mexico during the qualifiers

> Inexperience almost helps you. These guys don't know what to expect and they just want to go for it. It's good to have that hunger

Q&A

Can you remember your first World Cup experience as a child?
When I was 11; it was the opening game against Czechoslovakia at the 1990 World Cup. We lost 5-1. But it was brilliant that we were on the world stage. I was passionate about the sport so to see my heroes on TV was great.

At the last World Cup, the USA drew with England, won its group, then lost to Ghana in the round of 16. How do you compare the current squad with the 2010 team?
The 2010 team was a good team with a ton of experience. This team is younger but I think we're slightly better than in 2010 because of that youth. That inexperience almost helps you. These guys don't know what to expect and they just want to go for it. It's good to have that hunger. We've got some good playmakers. We're strong, very athletic.

You also have a different coach, Jurgen Klinsmann, who took over from Bob Bradley in 2011...
Jurgen challenges himself all the time. He challenges his players. He's always trying to take you out of your comfort zone and push you to the limit. It's clearly worked.

Klinsmann won a World Cup in 1990 as a player with West Germany and coached Germany to third place at the 2006 World Cup. How does that experience help?
Unfortunately, he's not going to kick a ball for us. But his experience in big moments – he's not fazed by them – will help us. We'll kind of read off his demeanour in those big moments, two minutes before we leave the dressing room and the music starts to play. Those are the moments that define a team.

One of the players you'll face is Cristiano Ronaldo, who was your team-mate at Manchester United when you first came to England. What was he like?
The first thing that stands out about Cristiano is his skill. And in order to be the best, to be considered the greatest, you have to have an arrogance, a bravado. But what gets lost about Cristiano is that I'm sure there's not a player in the world who works harder than he does. You see the underwear advertisements, the Lamborghinis, and the super-model girlfriends. Of course you see all that. But what you don't see is how hard Cristiano works. In the gym. On the field after practice. When I was at Manchester United, he would take a ball after training and just jog around the perimeter with the ball – doing step-overs, juggling, keep-ups – and nobody was watching him. No fans, no cameras. He works so hard. If you want to be the greatest, it doesn't come easily.

What kind of game plan do you need when you face Portugal and Ronaldo in your second game?
With a guy like him, you always have to be aware because he plays on the break. Every player he plays with is always trying to get him the ball. You have to always know where he is and then try to bottle him up.

You played 37 league games for Everton and 13 matches for the USA this season. At 35, how do you cope with so little rest and trans-Atlantic national team duty?
I've been doing this for 11 years, every summer, coming off a long season. Nothing's changed. I just try and manage my body and stay fit. Eating right. I've never paced myself. When I get offered to take a game off, I don't because it's not in my make-up. I'll take days off when I retire. I always want to play every game. I think it's important, because I don't think you can turn it off and on.

Interview by Mike Woitalla

The SQUAD

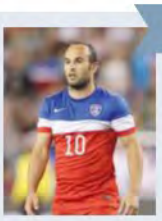
GOALKEEPERS
Brad Guzan (Aston Villa, Eng), **Tim Howard** (Everton, Eng), **Nick Rimando** (Real Salt Lake)

DEFENDERS
DaMarcus Beasley (Puebla, Mex), **Matt Besler** (Sporting Kansas City), **John Brooks** (Hertha Berlin, Ger, *middle*), **Geoff Cameron** (Stoke, Eng), **Timmy Chandler** (Eintracht Frankfurt, Ger), **Omar Gonzalez** (LA Galaxy), **Fabian Johnson** (Bor M'gladbach, Ger), **DeAndre Yedlin** (Seattle Sounders, *top*)

MIDFIELDERS
Kyle Beckerman (Real Salt Lake), **Alejandro Bedoya** (Nantes, Fra), **Michael Bradley** (Toronto), **Brad Davis** (Houston Dynamo), **Mix Diskerud** (Rosenborg, Nor), **Julian Green** (Bayern Munich, Ger), **Jermaine Jones** (Besiktas, Tur), **Graham Zusi** (Sporting Kansas City)

FORWARDS
Jozy Altidore (Sunderland, Eng), **Clint Dempsey** (Seattle Sounders), **Aron Johannsson** (AZ, Hol), **Chris Wondolowski** (San Jose Earthquakes, *bottom*)

Donovan dropped



Disappointed...no place for Donovan

Former skipper Landon Donovan, who is the USA's all-time leading scorer with 57 goals was left out by Jurgen Klinsmann. DC United striker Eddie Johnson, who was a regular in the qualifying campaign, was also omitted.

"I just see some other players slightly ahead of him," said Klinsmann of the 32-year-old Donovan. "His disappointment is huge.

"He took it very professionally because he is an outstanding professional player."

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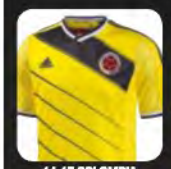
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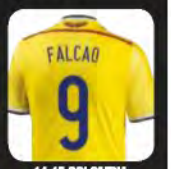

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World Service

The ultimate global news & results section

Close neighbours...Atletico Madrid's David Villa holds off Sergio Ramos of Real Madrid in the Champions League Final

Contents

INTERNATIONALS

92 AFC Challenge Cup
92 African Nations Cup
92 Windward Islands Tournament
92 Friendlies

DIGEST

94 Champions League Final
96 Europa League Final
98 ESM XI
100 European leagues round-up

CLUB RESULTS

108 UEFA Champions League
108 Europa League
108 European leagues
117 Libertadores Cup
118 South American leagues
119 Central & North America
120 Africa
120 Asia
121 Oceania

Glory...Europa League winner Beto of Sevilla

World Service

ENGLAND

Young Lions victorious

A 4-1 penalty shoot-out victory over Holland saw England crowned European Under-17 champions for the second time, having previously won the tournament in 2010.

Chelsea striker Dominic Solanke and Jari Schuurman of Feyenoord, who finished the tournament as joint-top scorers with four each, were on target in normal time before Jonjoe Kenny, a defender with Everton, struck the winning spot-kick.

GAMBIA

Two-year ban

CAF have suspended Gambia from all continental competition for two years after the ages of five players were deliberately falsified in a qualifying game for the African Under-20 Championship.

Joy...England win

GERMANY

Young skipper Draxler

Schalke midfielder Julian Draxler became Germany's youngest-ever captain of the national side, at 20 years of age, when he led the team in a goalless draw against Poland. With 20 of his provisional World Cup squad of 30 unavailable, Joachim Low was forced to put out a second-string side, handing 12 players their international debuts.

ISRAEL

Country's most capped

Yossi Benayoun became his country's most-capped player when the 34-year-

Internationals

AFC CHALLENGE CUP FINALS

Played in the Maldives

Group A

May 19: Palestine 1 Kyrgyzstan 0; Maldives 2 Myanmar 3.
May 21: Myanmar 0 Palestine 2; Kyrgyzstan 0 Maldives 2.
May 23: Maldives 0 Palestine 0; Kyrgyzstan 1 Myanmar 0.

AFC CHALLENGE CUP FINALS – GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Palestine (Q)	3	2	1	0	3	0	7
Maldives (Q)	3	1	1	1	4	3	4
Kyrgyzstan	3	1	0	2	1	3	3
Myanmar	3	1	0	2	3	5	3

Group B

May 20: Turkmenistan 5 Laos 1; Philippines 0 Afghanistan 0.
May 22: Laos 0 Philippines 2; Afghanistan 3 Turkmenistan 1.
May 24: Turkmenistan 0 Philippines 2; Afghanistan 0 Laos 0.

AFC CHALLENGE CUP FINALS – GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Philippines (Q)	3	2	1	0	4	0	7
Afghanistan (Q)	3	1	2	0	3	1	5
Turkmenistan	3	1	0	2	6	6	3
Laos	3	0	1	2	1	7	1

Top 2 in both groups qualified for semi-finals

Semi-finals

May 27: Palestine 2 Afghanistan 0; Philippines 3 Maldives 2 (aet).

3rd-place match

May 29: Afghanistan 1 Maldives 1 (aet, Maldives 8-7 on pens).

Final

May 30 - Male
Palestine 1 (Nu'man 59)
Philippines 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 6,300. **Ref:** Kovalenko (Uzb)

Palestine qualify for the 2015 Asian Cup finals

2015 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS

1st round

1st leg - Apr 12; 2nd leg - Apr 20
Mauritania v Mauritius 1-0, 2-0 (agg 3-0)
Eritrea v South Sudan – Eritrea withdrew after draw was made; South Sudan went through

2nd round

1st legs - May 17/18; 2nd legs - May 30-June 1
Burundi v Botswana 0-0, 0-1 (agg 0-1)
Central African Republic v Guinea-Bissau 0-0, 1-3 (agg 1-3)
Kenya v Comoros 1-0, 1-1 (agg 2-1)
Liberia v Lesotho 1-0, 0-2 (agg 1-2)
Libya v Rwanda 0-0, 0-3 (agg 0-3)
Madagascar v Uganda 2-1, 0-1 (agg 2-2, Uganda on away goals)
Malawi v Chad 2-0, 1-3 (agg 3-3, Malawi on away gls)
Mauritania v Equatorial Guinea 1-0, 0-3 (agg 1-3)
Mozambique v South Sudan 5-0, 0-0 (agg 5-0)
Namibia v Congo 1-0, 0-3 (agg 1-3)
Sao Tome e Principe v Benin 0-2, 0-2 (agg 0-4)
Swaziland v Sierra Leone 1-1, 0-1 (agg 1-2)
Tanzania v Zimbabwe 1-0, 2-2 (agg 3-2)
Gambia v Seychelles – Gambia suspended; Seychelles go through

WINDWARD ISLANDS TOURNAMENT

Played in Roseau, Dominica
Apr 30: Dominica 0 St Lucia 2; Grenada 0 St Vincent & The Grenadines 0.
May 2: Grenada 0 St Lucia 1; Dominica 2 St Vincent & The Grenadines 3.
May 4: Dominica 3 Grenada 5; St Lucia 0 St Vincent & The Grenadines 0.

WINDWARD ISLANDS TOURNAMENT – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
St Lucia (C)	3	2	1	0	3	0	7
St Vincent & G	3	1	2	0	3	2	5
Grenada	3	1	1	1	5	4	4
Dominica	3	0	0	3	5	10	0

BALTIC CUP

Played in Latvia

Semi-finals

May 29 - Ventspils
Finland 0
Lithuania 1 (Novikovas 42)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 631. **Ref:** Direktorenko (Lat)

May 29 - Liepaja
Latvia 0
Estonia 0
Att: 2,115. **Ref:** Slyva (Lit)
Latvia 4-2 on pens

3rd-place match

May 31 - Ventspils
Finland 2 (P Hetemaj 49, Moren 88)
Estonia 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Anufrijevs (Lat)

Final

May 31 - Liepaja
Latvia 1 (Bulvitis 8)
Lithuania 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 2,317. **Ref:** Tohver (Est)

FRIENDLIES

Wednesday, April 2
Apr 2 - Glendale (Arizona)
United States 2 (Bradley 15, Wondolowski 28)
Mexico 2 (Marquez 49, Pulido 67)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 59,066. **Ref:** Moreno (Pan)
United States: Rimando - Beltran (Yedlin 72), Gonzalez, Besler (Goodson 59), Parkhurst, Beckerman (Edu 72), Zusi (Donovan 59), Davis (Green 59), Bradley, Wondolowski (E Johnson 64), Dempsey.
Mexico: Munoz (Talavera 46) - Chavez (Aguilar 63), Valenzuela, Marquez, F Rodriguez, Pena (Jimenez 46), Zavala (J C Medina 46), Layun (Ponce 68), Pulido, Brizuela (Montes 57), Fabian.

Friday, April 11
Apr 11 - Doha, Qatar
Philippines 3 (Dizon 14, Steuble 32, Doctora 90)
Nepal 0
HT: 2-0

Sunday, April 13
Apr 13 - Dubai, UAE
Afghanistan 0
Kyrgyzstan 0

Tuesday, April 15
Apr 15 - Doha, Qatar
Yemen 0
Chad 0

Thursday, April 17
Apr 17 - Les Abymes
Guadeloupe 3
French Guiana 2

Saturday, April 19
Apr 19 - Les Abymes
Guadeloupe 0
Martinique 1 (Angely 11)
HT: 0-1

Saturday, April 26
Apr 26 - Dar es Salaam
Tanzania 0
Burundi 3 (Kavumbagu 45, Tambwe 56, Ndikumana 60)
HT: 0-1

Sunday, April 27
Apr 27 - Cebu
Philippines 0
Malaysia 0

Sunday, May 4
May 4 - Dushanbe
Tajikistan 1 (Davronov 11)
Afghanistan 0
HT: 1-0

May 4 - Mbeya
Tanzania 0
Malawi 0

Sunday, May 11
May 11 - Lobatse
Botswana 1 (Koko 33)
Swaziland 4 (Tsabedze 26, 68, Badenhorst 50, Hlatshwako 52)
HT: 1-1

Monday, May 12
May 12 - Kuwait City, Kuwait
Afghanistan 1 (Mashriqi)
Kyrgyzstan 0
HT: 1-0

Tuesday, May 13
May 13 - Hamburg
Germany 0
Poland 0
Att: 37,569. **Ref:** Fernandez Borbalan (Spa)
Germany: Zieler (Ter Stegen 46) - Rudiger (Howedes 46), Mustafi, Ginter, Sorg (Gunter 82), Rudy, Kramer, Goretzka (Hahn 46), Meyer (Arnold 77), Draxler, Volland (Jung 71).
Poland: Boruc - Olkowski, Cionek (Wilusz 77), Szukala, Wawrzyniak, Krychowiak, Klich (Wszolek 81), Peszko (Zyro 53), Obraniak (Linetty 53), Rybus (Wolski 90), Robak (Milik 53).

May 13 - Male
Maldives 7 (Fasir 10, 83, Bokury 50, Ashfaq pen 60, 61, Aduham 82, Shamweel 74)
Laos 1 (Sihavong 48)
HT: 1-0

Wednesday, May 14
May 14 - Kuwait City
Kuwait 3
Afghanistan 2
HT: 2-0

Friday, May 16
May 16 - Kuwait City
Kuwait 2
Kyrgyzstan 2
HT: 1-1

Saturday, May 17
May 17 - Amsterdam
Holland 1 (Van Persie 37)
Ecuador 1 (Montero 9)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 52,000. **Ref:** Kralovec (CzR)
Holland: Cillessen - Janmaat (Verhaegh 46), Veltman, De Vrij, Martins Indi, Kongolo (Van Aanholt 46), Clasie (De Guzman 46), Wijnaldum, Blind, Van Persie (Huntelaar 79), Depay.
Ecuador: Banguera - Paredes, Guagua, Erazo, Bagui, A Valencia, Noboa (Gruezo 61), Castillo (Quinonez 72), Montero (J Ayovi 65), Rojas (Achilier 82), Caicedo (Wila 38; Martinez 57).

Sunday, May 18
May 18 - Kapfenberg, Austria
Belarus 0
Iran 0
Iran: A Haghighi - Montazeri, Pooladi, Sadeghi, Mahini (Khanzadeh 65), Teymourian (Nekounam 75), Haddadifar (Jahanbakhsh 65), R Haghighi, Khalatbary (Rahmani 65), Sharifi (Heydari 65), Ansarifard (Hajsafy 80).

Tuesday, May 20
May 20 - Cayenne
French Guiana 0
Surinam 0

Wednesday, May 21
May 21 - Ouagadougou
Burkina Faso 1 (Zongo 89)
Senegal 1 (P K Diop 55)
HT: 0-0

May 21 - Helsinki
Finland 2 (Pukki 18, 20)
Czech Republic 2 (Vydra 19, Husbauer 36)
HT: 2-2. **Att:** 6,547. **Ref:** Drachta (Aut)
Finland: Hradecky - Sorsa, J Ojala (Heikkila 89), Moisander (Mantyla 46), Raitala, Pohjanpalo (M Vayrynen 71), Ring, Sparv, Tainio (Schuller 46), P Hetemaj, Pukki (T Vayrynen 83).
Czech Republic: Vaclik - Kaderabek, Suchy (Prochazka 46), M Kadlec, Limbersky (Pudil 66), Vacha, Darida, Dockal (Vanek 46), Husbauer (Horava 77), Krejci, Vydra (V Kadlec 46).

May 21 - Mitrovica
Kosovo 1 (Albert Bunjaku 35)
Turkey 6 (Ahmet 2, Bilal 34, Sahan 49, Mustafa 54, 71, Alper pen 87)
HT: 1-2. **Ref:** Pashaj (Alb)
Kosovo: Mushica - Curri, L Rexhepi (Zhdrella 71), Alushi, Nushi, Perdedaj (Metaj 46), Hetemaj (Jashanica 80), Toski (Hoxha 60), Rashkaj, Albert Bunjaku (Avdijaj 60), D Rexhepi (E Bunjaku 60).
Turkey: Volkan Babacan - Ishak Dogan, Ugur (Caner 73), Alper, Adem (Sahan 46), Ozan, Mustafa (Olcan 78), Bilal (Calhanoglu 69), Aydin (Turgut 46), Camdal, Ahmet (Selcuk Inan 78).

Unforgettable...Bunjaku scores Kosovo's first international goal

old Queens Park Rangers midfielder made his 95th international appearance in a 3-0 friendly defeat away to Mexico.

KOSOVO

Historic first goal

After being held to a goalless draw in their first FIFA-recognised game – which was against Haiti in March – Albert Bunjaku of Kaiserslautern scored Kosovo's first official international goal in a 6-1 loss to Turkey.

MAURITIUS

Oldest-ever African

Kersley Appou became Africa's oldest international footballer, beating Roger Milla's record for Cameroon, when he appeared as a substitute for Mauritius in their 1-0 loss to Mauritania in an African Nations Cup qualifier at the age of 43 years and 354 days.

Appou, who plays his club football for Pamplemousses in the Mauritian league, still has some way to go to match MacDonald Taylor Sr of the US Virgin Islands who holds the world record of 46 years and 217 days.

May 21 - Vaduz
Liechtenstein 1 (Burgmeier pen 79)
Belarus 5 (Gordeichuk 13, Kislyak 15, Krivets 23, Savitsky 60, 67)
HT: 0-3. **Att:** 750. **Ref:** Kopriwa (Lux)

Thursday, May 22

May 22 - Debrecen
Hungary 2 (Dzsudzsak 25, R Varga 69)
Denmark 2 (Eriksen 56, Schone 72)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 20,000. **Ref:** Marciniak (Pol)
Hungary: Gulacsi - J Varga, Liptak (Juhasz 57), Lang, Korhut (Szabo 57), Patkai (Kalmar 46), Tozser, Gyurcso (Koman 46), Szakaly (R Varga 46), Dzsudzsak, Rudolf (Nikolics 67).
Denmark: Andersen - Ahlmann, Agger, Kjaer (Wurtz 46), Jacobsen, Kvist (Schone 46), Kusk (Rasmussen 46), Krohn-Dehli (Kahlenberg 79), J Poulsen (Bjelland 46), Eriksen, Braithwaite.

May 22 - Kiev
Ukraine 2 (Ordets 20, Stepanenko 80)
Niger 1 (Omarou 57)
HT: 1-0
Ukraine: Pyatov - Selin, Kucher, Ordets, Fedetskyi, Stepanenko, Harmash (Devic 46; Bezus 87), Konoplyanka (Bolbat 62), Edmar (Makarenko 73), Yarmolenko, Antonov (Zozulya 46).

Friday, May 23

May 23 - Ritzing, Austria
Bulgaria 1 (Galabinov 18)
Canada 1 (Hutchinson pen 27)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Lechner (Aut)
Bulgaria: V Stoyanov - Terziev (I Milanov 80), Bodurov, G Milanov (Zlatinski 82), Manolev (Slavchev 46), Nedelev (Alexandrov 60), Dyakov, Y Hristov (S Popov 74), V Minev, I Popov, Galabinov (Gargorov 60).
Canada: Borjan - Ledgerwood, Hainault, Straith, De Guzman, Pacheco (Piette 86), Ricketts, Jackson (Larin 74), Hutchinson (Haber 88), Edgar, Edwini-Bonsu (Gagnon-Lapare 68).

May 23 - Faro, Portugal
Morocco 4 (El Kaddouri 30, El Arabi 37, 87, Chahechouhe 71)
Mozambique 0
HT: 2-0

May 23 - Senec
Slovakia 2 (Weiss 45, Jendrisek 86)
Montenegro 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 2,587. **Ref:** Frankowski (Pol)
Slovakia: Dubravka (Novota 46) - Pekarik, Gyomber, Durica, Cikos, Pecovsky (Farkas 90), Guede, Sestak (Mak 46), Weiss (Sabo 70), Stoch (Jendrisek 70), Nemec (Sylvestr 46).
Montenegro: Poleksic - Zverotic, Basa (Tomasevic 46), Simic, Balic (Djordjevic 67), Vesovic (Jovanovic 85), Vukcevic, Jankovic (Nikac 61), V Bozovic, Bakic (Boskovic 51), Jovetic (Zoric 88).

Saturday, May 24

May 24 - Jerez de la Frontera, Spain
Saudi Arabia 0
Moldova 4 (Armas 8, Picusciac pen 32, Alexeev 34, Gatcan 53)
HT: 0-3. **Ref:** Hernandez (Spa)
Moldova: Gaiduchevici - Armas (Posmac 75), Golovatenco, Racu, Epureanu, Ionita, Gatcan (Cascaval 89), Picusciac (M Antoniuc 78), A Antoniuc (Patras 68), Alexeev (Cebotaru 46), Sidorenco.

Sunday, May 25

May 25 - Geneva, Switzerland
Kosovo 1 (Albert Bunjaku 25)
Senegal 3 (Niasse 41, 49, Sakho 51)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 13,143. **Ref:** Klossner (Swi)

May 25 - Colombes, France
Mali 1 (Sako 7)
Guinea 2 (Landel 31, M Yattara pen 70)
HT: 1-1

May 25 - Dublin
Republic of Ireland 1 (Walters 78)
Turkey 2 (Ahmet 17, Camdal 76)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Buquet (Fra)
Rep Ireland: Elliot - Coleman, O'Shea, Delaney (Meyler 66), Ward, Whelan (Quinn 82), Wilson, McGeady (Murphy 66), McClean, Hoolahan, Long (Walters 66).
Turkey: Onur - Gokhan Gonul, Toprak, Hakan Balta, Caner, Ahmet (Camdal 70), Selcuk Inan (Ozyakup 21), Sahin (Ishak Dogan 85), Bilal (Ozan 46), Calhanoglu (Olcan 63), Erdinc (Mustafa 81).

May 25 - Bangkok
Thailand 1
Kuwait 1
HT: 0-1

Monday, May 26

May 26 - Sydney
Australia 1 (Cahill 14)
South Africa 1 (Patosi 13)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 50,459. **Ref:** Kim Jong-hyeok (SKo)
Australia: Ryan - Franjic (Wilkshire 53), McGowan, Wilkinson, Davidson, Holland (Bozanic 73), Milligan, Troisi (McKay 46), Oar (Vidosic 71), Cahill (Halloran 62), Leckie (Kennedy 84).
South Africa: Meyiwa - Ngcongca, Nthethe, Mathoho, Mokeke, Kekana, Letsholonyane, Phala (Zungu 46), Serero (Nhlapho 90+1), Patosi (Zwane 63), Rantie (Mthembu 60).

May 26 - Genk
Belgium 5 (Lukaku 3, 23, 54, Chadli 71, De Bruyne 90)
Luxembourg 1 (Joachim 13)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Hagen (Nor)
Belgium: Bossut - Alderweireld (Vanden Borre 46), Vermaelen, Kompany (Van Buyten 46), Vertonghen (Lombaerts 77), Witsel (Defour 46), De Bruyne, Fellaini, Lukaku (Origi 61), E Hazard (Januzaj 46), Mirallas (Chadli 46).
Luxembourg: Moris - Chanot, Janisch, Schnell, Philipps (Holter 83), Gerson (Turpel 88), Da Mota (Laterza 77), Bensi, Joachim, Mutsch, Jans.

May 26 - Tallinn
Estonia 1 (Klavan 31)
Gibraltar 1 (Gosling 71)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 4,805. **Ref:** Pisani (Mlt)

May 26 - Kufstein, Austria
Macedonia 0
Cameroon 2 (Webo 52, Choupo-Moting 82)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 1,500. **Ref:** Schorgenhofer (Aut)
Cameroon: Ndjock (Ndy-Assembe 46) - Nounkeu (Nyom 74), Bedimo, Djeugoue (N'Koulou 74), Olinga (Moukandjo 80), Song, Enoh (Loe 86), Nguemo, Matip, Choupo-Moting, Webo (Idrissou 55).

May 26 - Hartberg, Austria
Montenegro 0
Iran 0
Ref: Eisner (Aut)
Montenegro: M Bozovic (Petkovic 90) - Vesovic, Basa (Simic 61), Tomasevic, Balic (V Bozovic 59), Vukcevic, Zverotic, Jovanovic, Boskovic (Nikac 65), Djordjevic (Jankovic 70), Jovetic (Bakic 72).
Iran: Ahmadi - Beikzadeh (Pooladi 15), Sadeghi (Alenemeh 68), Montazeri, Hosseini (Beitashour 46), Heydari (Jahanbakhsh 61), Teymourian, Dejagah (Hajsafy 61), Nekounam, Shojaei, Ghoochannejhad (Azmoun 61).

May 26 - St Petersburg
Russia 1 (Kerzhakov 82)
Slovakia 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 11,500. **Ref:** Clattenburg (Eng)
Russia: Akinfeev (Lodygin 75) - Yeschenko (Kozlov 46), V Berezutsky, Ignashevich, Kombarov, Fayzulin (Mogilevets 86), Denisov, Dzagoev (Kanunnikov 46), Samedov (Ionov 75), Shatov, Kokorin (Kerzhakov 75).
Slovakia: Mucha - Pekarik, Durica, Hubocan (Cikos 77), Gyomber, Pecovsky (Salata 68), Mak, Weiss (Sabo 72), Stoch (Sestak 89), Kiss, Nemec (Sylvestr 62).

May 26 - Harrison, USA
Serbia 2 (Tadic 13, Kolarov 22)
Jamaica 1 (Seaton 53)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 2,000. **Ref:** Gantar (Can)
Serbia: Stojkovic - Ivanovic, Pejcinovic, Kolarov, Gudelj, Z Tosic, Tadic, Matic (Petrovic 86), Jojic, Mitrovic (Djordjevic 69), Markovic (Basta 60).
Jamaica: Blake - Doyley, U Edwards, Powell, Lawrence (Finlayson 74), Humphrey (Gray 71), Austin, J-R Edwards (Beckett 46), Grant (R Campbell 78), Dawkins (D Brown 83), Mattocks (Seaton 46).

Tuesday, May 27

May 27 - Paris
France 4 (Pogba 15, Giroud 51, 69, Remy 67)
Norway 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 78,000. **Ref:** Sutton (RoI)
France: Ruffier - Debuchy, Koscielny, Sakho, Evra (Digne 46), Pogba (Sissoko 46), Cabaye (Cabella 80), Matuidi (Mavuba 74), Valbuena (Grenier 70), Giroud, Griezmann (Remy 65).
Norway: Nyland - Linnes (Ringstad 90), Hangeland, Nordtveit, Hogli, Johansen, Tettey (Konradsen 72), Jenssen (Braaten 57), Daehli (Samuelsen 77), Elyounoussi (Berisha 72), King (Nielsen 63).

May 27 - Saitama
Japan 1 (Uchida 43)
Cyprus 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 58,564. **Ref:** Raczkowski (Pol)
Japan: Kawashima - Uchida (H Sakai 46), Morishige, Konno (Yoshida 46), Nagatomo (Inoha 78), Yamaguchi, Endo (Hasebe 46), Honda, Kagawa, Kakitani (Okubo 58), Okazaki (Kiyotake 70).

May 27 - Mauer, Austria
Moldova 1 (Sidorenco 7)
Canada 1 (Ricketts 10)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 200. **Ref:** Drachta (Aut)
Moldova: Cebanu (Namasco 46) - Golovatenco, Racu, Epureanu, Posmac, Ionita, Gatcan, Picusciac (Cebotaru 49), A Antoniuc, Patras (Gheorghiev 74), Sidorenco.
Canada: Borjan - Ledgerwood, Hainault, Straith, De Guzman, Pacheco, Ricketts (Piette 83), Jackson (Haber 87), Hutchinson, Edwini-Bonsu (Larin 59), Gagnon-Lapare.

May 27 - Paramaribo
Surinam 1 (Loswijk 53)
French Guiana 0
HT: 0-0

May 27 - Dar es Salaam
Tanzania 1 (Namwela og 36)
Malawi 0
HT: 1-0

May 27 - Geneva, Switzerland
United Arab Emirates 3 (Ahmed 40, O Abdulrahman 52, Salem 85)
Armenia 4 (Hayrapetyan 38, Mkhitaryan 42, 67, Hovsepyan 71)
HT: 1-2

May 27 - San Francisco
United States 2 (Diskerud 75, Johannsson 81)
Azerbaijan 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 24,688. **Ref:** Bejarano (CR)
United States: Howard - F Johnson (Yedlin 62), Cameron (Gonzalez 46), Besler, Beasley (Chandler 46), Zusi (Davis 46), Jones, Bradley, Bedoya (Diskerud 71), Altidore, Wondolowski (Johannsson 62).

May 27 - Almalyk
Uzbekistan 0
Oman 1
HT: 0-1

Wednesday, May 28

May 28 - Faro, Portugal
Angola 2 (Bastos 52, Yano 89)
Morocco 0
HT: 0-0

May 28 - Copenhagen
Denmark 1 (Agger pen 90+3)
Sweden 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 27,872. **Ref:** Moen (Nor)
Denmark: Schmeichel - Jacobsen (P Ankersen 67), Kjaer (Bjelland 88), Agger, Ahlmann (Knudsen 53), Schone (Kusk 70), Hojbjerg, Kvist (Rasmussen 84), Krohn-Dehli (Kahlenberg 79), Eriksen, Braithwaite.
Sweden: Nordfeldt - Lustig (M Johansson 70), Granqvist, Antonsson, P Bengtsson, S Larsson, Wernbloom (Hiljemark 78), Kallstrom (Zengin 84), Elmander (Hysen 70), Ibrahimovic (Toivonen 46), Berg (Durmaz 70).

May 28 - Mexico City
Mexico 3 (Layun 43, 62, Fabian 85)
Israel 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 90,000. **Ref:** Bonilla (ESv)
Mexico: Corona (G Ochoa 73) - Layun (Pulido 72), F Rodriguez, Reyes, Salcido, Fabian, Blanco (R Jimenez 37), Guardado, Aguilar, Brizuela (Ponce 59), Peralta (J Hernandez 46).
Israel: Harosh - Shpungin, Tal Ben Haim/D, Gershon, Kayal (Natcho 46), Refaelov (Vermouth 59), Yeini (Buzaglo 83), Zahavi (Benayoun 63), Sahar (Tal Ben Haim/F 46), Ben Harush, Damari (Ben Basat 73).

May 28 - London
Scotland 2 (Mulgrew 9, Egwuekwe og 51)
Nigeria 2 (Uchebo 41, Nwofor 90)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 24,000. **Ref:** Probert (Eng)
Scotland: McGregor - Hutton, Greer, Hanley, Robertson (Forsyth 77), Brown, Morrison (Boyd 62), Mulgrew, Anya (Whittaker 84), Maloney, Naismith (Martin 46).
Nigeria: Ejide - Yobo, Echiejile, Egwuekwe, Odunlami (Ambrose 75), Obi (Igiebor 63), Uzoenyi (Moses 61), Gabriel, Babatunde (Oduamadi 66), Ameobi (Nwofor 62), Uchebo (Odemwingie 55).

May 28 - Seoul
South Korea 0
Tunisia 1 (Z Dhaouadi 44)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 57,000. **Ref:** Atkinson (Eng)
South Korea: Jung Sung-ryong - Lee Yong, Kim Young-gwon, Hong Jeong-ho (Kwak Tae-hwi 61), Yun Suk-young, Lee Chung-yong (Ji Dong-won 82), Koo Ja-cheol (Lee Keun-ho 59), Ki Sung-yeung (Ha Dae-sung 77), Han Kook-young, Son Heung-min (Kim Bo-kyung 67), Park Chu-young (Kim Jin-su 75).

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Real stun Atletico to land "*la decima*"

World Soccer was launched in October 1960 on the back of the excitement generated by Real Madrid's fifth Champions Cup triumph, over Eintracht Frankfurt at Glasgow's Hampden Park.

Amassing the first five cups took the Spanish club five years; collecting the second quintet took 54 years. That speaks volumes for the competitive, commercial and technical explosion generated by the initial chain reaction.

As time goes on so the traditions embodied in football clubs become ever more significant. Countries change. The geopolitical face of Europe in the 1950s featured the likes of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia – all of which are now long gone.

However, the cities and clubs remain and this latest Champions League Final illustrated the historic connections. Real and Atletico had met once before, in the semi-finals back in 1959. Lisbon itself had been the stage for the very first match in the history of the competition: a 3-3 draw between Sporting Lisbon and Partizan Belgrade in the autumn of 1955.

> "I would have come here for a penny if it meant I could win the big titles"
> Real Madrid's €91million signing Gareth Bale

Great players have come and gone, even from 1959. Real's Alfredo Di Stefano, once an inspiration and now honorary president, is 87 and one of the few survivors that include Paco Gento and Raymond Kopa and Atletico's Joaquin Peiro and Enrique Collar.

Their superstar successors are Cristiano Ronaldo, Sergio Ramos and Gareth Bale – and who could have forecast this for the 24-year-old Welshman a year or so ago when Tottenham Hotspur chairman Daniel Levy was holding out for as much money as he could get?

Now Real have a new, 10th entry in the chapter of dramas which will comprise the pressurising legacy to the superstars of another year. Achieving this meant denying an Atletico who, working like demons, very nearly completed a double. Only the previous weekend they had proven their big-occasion pedigree in dethroning Barcelona as Spanish champions – and in the Catalan capital, too.

The script was clear. If the Final was to be goal-strewn then Real, with their aristocratic flair and fragile defence, would emerge victorious; if it were to be a single-goal affair then the energetic artisans of Atletico would be parading the cup.

To the roaring delight of the *Colchoneros*' fans, the fates appeared in their favour.

In the 33rd minute Bale arrowed through the Atletico defence but, intimidated by goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois, shot badly wide. Three minutes later and a blunder by the diminished Iker Casillas offered a goal to Diego Godin for Atletico.

Godin had scored the goal which had sunk Barcelona; all his eight goals this past season had been headers. It almost seemed too neat to be true.

Crucial goal...Bale turns away in triumph after his extra-time header put Real in front

Real blunder...a scrambling Casillas fails to keep out a header from Godin (out of picture)

Last gasp...Ramos rises above the Atletico defence to level the scores in the third minute of stoppage time

Failed gamble...the injured Costa limps off

But, unassessed at this point, the keystone moment had already come and gone. Atletico coach Diego Simeone had watched top-scoring Diego Costa come through an hour's training the previous evening and decided he was fit to start.

In fact, he was not. Real had picked half-fit Ronaldo and Karim Benzema but they were able to nurse themselves through the match. Costa could not. Simeone had to replace him after just nine minutes. "It was my mistake," said the Argentinian later. "It cost us."

It cost them twice over. Firstly, Atletico had no effective striking substitute on the bench. Secondly, as Real could turn to the devastating fresh legs of substitutes Marcelo, Isco and Alvaro Morata, Atletico were short of a third pair of fresh legs.

Real, though far from their best in the absence of the suspended Xabi Alonso and injured Pepe, wore Atletico down through sheer intensity in the second half. Luka Modric wasted too many passes; Ronaldo was largely a spectator; Bale, three times a failure in front of goal, began to flag.

But when Ramos thumped home his equalising header in the dying minutes to earn extra time, there could now be only one winner.

Atletico made it bravely to half-time. Then Bale and Marcelo killed them off before Ronaldo – to the delight of all Portugal – applied the coup de grace from the penalty spot. His record-extending 17th goal of the campaign also secured the Portuguese superstar the status of being the only man to score in a Final for two different clubs, after his goal for Manchester United in 2008 against Chelsea.

> "It was my responsibility to have Diego Costa play and obviously I made a mistake"
> Atletico Madrid coach Diego Simeone

There is more. The penalty lifted Ronaldo on to 67 goals, level with Barcelona's Lionel Messi in the all-time European Champions Cup rankings and thus only four off the 71 of old Real hero Raul. (In overall UEFA club competitions, Raul claims 77 and Filippo Inzaghi 70, ahead of Messi and Ronaldo).

Barely noticed coach Carlo Ancelotti, a remarkably impassive spectator in his technical area for much of the match by comparison with Simeone, celebrated his own third Champions League success as a coach, equalling Bob Paisley's record with Liverpool.

Ancelotti thus also became one of only five men to win as a coach with two different clubs and one of only three to win as player (1989, 1990 with Milan) and coach (Milan 2003 and 2007 plus Madrid) alongside Frank Rijkaard and Pep Guardiola.

Atletico returned home to prepare for Chelsea-driven change: the excellent Courtois will end his loan and return to Stamford Bridge while Costa is favoured to replace Fernando Torres in attack.

As for Real, victory will send them on to Morocco for the FIFA Club World Cup in December...albeit only after Bale takes them "home" to Wales for the European Super Cup against fellow Spaniards Sevilla on August 12 in Cardiff.

Keir Radnedge

Number 10...Real skipper Casillas lifts the Champions League trophy

EUROPA LEAGUE

Guttmann's curse strikes Benfica again

Beaten finalists in last season's Europa League, Benfica fell at the last hurdle once again as Sevilla won on penalties in Turin to extend the Portuguese side's barren run in Europe to 52 years, during which time they have played in eight Finals and lost them all.

Legend has it that the great Hungarian coach Bela Guttmann put a curse on the club from Lisbon in 1962 when, having led the team to a second successive European Cup, was denied a bonus by the board. He resigned and, it is said, as he stormed out of his meeting with directors, he vowed that Benfica would not win another European title in 100 years.

In keeping with the competition's Byzantine format, neither finalist had qualified for the competition in the strict sense of the word. Benfica were among the eight teams parachuted into the round of 32 after being knocked out of the Champions League group stage, while Sevilla – who were playing their 19th match of the campaign – originally sneaked in after Malaga and Rayo Vallecano, who both finished above them in La Liga last season, were kicked out of the competition for falling foul of UEFA's licensing regulations.

> "The secret to our glory has been the unity of the team. We don't want stars, we want to be a team"
> Sevilla goalkeeper Beto

The two Spanish sides were among seven teams who were barred over licensing regulations – a decision that looks harsh in the light of the recent settlements that UEFA have reached with Manchester City and Paris Saint-Germain over financial fairplay.

Borac Banja Luka (Bosnia), CSKA Sofia (Bulgaria), PAS Giannina (Greece), Buducnost Podgorica and Grablj (Montenegro) all failed to obtain licences, while Besiktas and Metalist Kharkiv were kicked out over match-fixing cases. Banja Luka, who finished third in the Bosnian league, were replaced by ninth-placed Zrinjski Mostar after Celik, Olimpic, Slavija and Leotar were also all deemed unfit to take part by UEFA.

Dejected...Benfica are beaten in a European Final for the eighth successive time

Evocative names

Altogether, 194 teams took part at some stage in the competition, ranging from Austrian third-tier side Pasching, who qualified by winning their national cup, to two-time European champions Juventus, who were among the teams who started in the Champions League.

Other evocative names included former European Cup-winners Cup champions Dinamo Tbilisi, who were thumped 8-0 on aggregate by Tottenham Hotspur in the play-off round, and former European champions Red Star Belgrade, who were beaten 3-1 by Chernomorets Odessa in the third qualifying round.

UEFA's attempts to talk up the Europa League basically founder on the sheer complexity of the competition. The 10-month long tournament featured four qualifying rounds of two legs each, a group stage with a round robin mini-league format and then reverted to the two-leg knockout format for four more rounds, followed by the one-off Final in Turin.

Teams can qualify by winning their domestic Cup (or, in some cases just by being finalists), finishing anywhere between second and sixth in the league, getting knocked out of the Champions League, or simply by being nice and taking one of three places awarded under UEFA's Fair Play initiative.

Teams can enter the fray at any point between the first qualifying round in July and the round of 32 the following February, depending on the ranking of their league in

UEFA's highly complex system of coefficients. Eliminated Champions League teams enter at three points: the third and fourth qualifying rounds and the round of 16.

FIFA presidential candidate Jerome Champagne is among those who would like to see all connections severed between the Champions League and Europa League. In his manifesto for the FIFA presidency, he asks: "Is it possible to motivate the clubs from mid-size leagues, which take part in the Europa League, when they see the wealthiest clubs relegated from the Champions League taking the best places and the money coming with them?

"Giving a spot in the UCL next season to the winner of the Europa League is a good idea to motivate the clubs finishing second or third in their leagues, the winners of the national FA cups, etc.

"But it is not if it becomes another parachute for a wealthy club, having failed in the Champions League, to re-enter the following season via the Europa League."

Battle...Benfica's Ezequiel Garay (no24)

Spot on...Kevin Gameiro celebrates his winning penalty as Sevilla triumph 4-2

Doing it the hard way

This season's winners Sevilla certainly did it the hard way. They began the campaign easily enough, with a 9-1 aggregate win over Montenegro's Mladost Podgorica, and then beat Slask Wroclaw by the same score in the play-off round. After that they topped their group, coming through unbeaten against Slovan Liberec, Freiburg and Estoril, before sneaking past Maribor 4-3 in the round of 32.

But drawn against neighbours Real Betis in the round of 16, they appeared down and out after losing the first leg 2-0 at home, only to bounce back and win the away game by the same score before progressing 4-3 on penalties. They also overcame a first-leg deficit in the quarter-finals on their way to beating Porto 4-2. The real drama, however, was to come in the semi-final against Valencia.

Having comfortably won the first leg 2-0 at home, Sevilla were 3-0 down after 70 minutes of the return before Stephane Mbia's goal in the fourth minute of stoppage time sent them through on away goals.

The Final at the Juventus stadium saw the Spanish side's Portuguese goalkeeper Beto deny Benfica on several occasions, while referee Felix Brych of Germany waved away numerous penalty appeals during a goalless 120 minutes.

Although Benfica coach Jorge Jesus said that most of his players were unaware of the curse of the late Guttmann, their body language before the shoot-out suggested the worst. And when Paraguay forward Oscar Cardozo approached the second penalty with a stuttering, confidence-lacking run-up, the inevitable happened and Beto saved his shot. When Rodrigo's following effort for Benfica was also stopped, it was all over.

"The capacity of this team to suffer has made it possible," said Sevilla coach Unai Emery.

"We suffered against Betis, against Porto and against Valencia, and here as well, so we suffered and we competed. We played our first game in August when we should have been on the beach."

Only 33,120 watched the game – which is nearly 6,000 short of capacity – and jeers rang around the stadium when the official attendance was announced. The empty seats were especially galling for the fans of the two finalists, who had received only 9,000 tickets each. Another 9,500 tickets were sold to the public through UEFA's website, which left a whopping 12,500 for the "local organising committee, national associations, commercial partners and broadcasters, and for the corporate hospitality programme".

Salzburg's Jonathan Soriano finished the competition as the top scorer with eight goals, including an astonishing 50-metre lob during the 3-0 win away to Ajax. Salzburg, who along with Tottenham, managed a 100 per cent record in the group stage before eventually going out to Basle in the round of 16.

In another milestone, Shakhter Karagandy travelled 4,600km each way to play AZ in Alkmaar, the furthest any team has ever travelled for a UEFA Champions League or UEFA Europa League group game.

Meanwhile, Eintracht Frankfurt dispelled the myth that supporters do not care about the competition when 12,000 of their fans made the trip to Bordeaux. A 1-0 win helped them qualify for the round of 32, where they were beaten on away goals by Porto.

Brian Homewood

Champions...Sevilla skipper, and man of the match in Turin, Ivan Rakitic lifts the trophy

ESM TEAM OF THE MONTH

European Sports Media

HOW IT WORKS

Every month, journalists from each member of the European Sports Media group select their first XI based on the best individual performances from Europe's top competitions. For details of how each ESM member voted, visit worldsoccer.com/

SEASON RANKINGS

Cumulative votes through the season

GOALKEEPERS

Thibaut Courtois (Atletico Madrid)	42
Manuel Neuer (Bayern Munich)	18
Gianluigi Buffon (Juventus)	6
Vincent Enyeama (Lille)	6
Morgan De Sanctis (Roma)	5
Victor Valdes (Barcelona)	4
Iker Casillas (Real Madrid)	3
Beto (Sevilla)	2
Artur Boruc (Southampton)	2
Petr Cech (Chelsea)	2
Joe Hart (Manchester City)	2
Hugo Lloris (Tottenham Hotspur)	2
Diego Lopez (Real Madrid)	2
Salvatore Sirigu (Paris Saint-Germain)	2
Roman Weidenfeller (Borussia Dortmund)	2
Jasper Cillessen (Ajax)	1
Andrea Consigli (Atalanta)	1
Ralf Fahrmann (Schalke)	1
Fraser Forster (Celtic)	1
Samir Handanovic (Internazionale)	1
Helton (Porto)	1
Tim Krul (Newcastle United)	1
Bernd Leno (Bayer Leverkusen)	1
Vito Mannone (Sunderland)	1
Simon Mignolet (Liverpool)	1
Keylor Navas (Levante)	1
Pepe Reina (Napoli)	1
Wojciech Szczesny (Arsenal)	1
Marc-Andre Ter Stegen (Bor M'gladbach)	1

DEFENDERS

Sergio Ramos (Real Madrid)	30
Diego Godin (Atletico Madrid)	24
David Alaba (Bayern Munich)	22
Pepe (Real Madrid)	21
Mehdi Benatia (Roma)	20
Gerard Pique (Barcelona)	19
Filipe Luis (Atletico Madrid)	18
Dante (Bayern Munich)	16
Dani Alves (Barcelona)	15
Martin Skrtel (Liverpool)	15
Per Mertesacker (Arsenal)	12
Thiago Silva (Paris Saint-Germain)	12
Branislav Ivanovic (Chelsea)	11
Marcelo (Real Madrid)	11
Juanfran (Atletico Madrid)	10
Dani Carvajal (Real Madrid)	9
Mats Hummels (Borussia Dortmund)	9
Vincent Kompany (Manchester City)	9
Giorgio Chiellini (Juventus)	8
Miranda (Atletico Madrid)	8
Gregory Van der Wiel (Paris Saint-Germain)	8
Pablo Zabaleta (Manchester City)	8
Leighton Baines (Everton)	6
Jerome Boateng (Bayern Munich)	6
Andrea Barzagli (Juventus)	5
Laurent Koscielny (Arsenal)	5
Luisao (Benfica)	5
Cesar Azpilicueta (Chelsea)	4
Federico Balzaretti (Roma)	4

MAY 14

APRIL 14

Gary Cahill (Chelsea)	4
Juan Cuadrado (Fiorentina)	4
Marquinhos (Paris Saint-Germain)	4
Mamadou Sakho (Liverpool)	4
Fabio Coentrao (Real Madrid)	3
Seamus Coleman (Everton)	3
Kevin Grosskreutz (Borussia Dortmund)	3
Stephan Lichtsteiner (Juventus)	3
Maxwell (Paris Saint-Germain)	3
Bacary Sagna (Arsenal)	3
Omer Toprak (Bayer Leverkusen)	3
Leonardo Bonucci (Juventus)	2
Leandro Castan (Roma)	2
Patrice Evra (Manchester United)	2
Fabinho (Monaco)	2
Ezequiel Garay (Benfica)	2
Kieran Gibbs (Arsenal)	2
Simon Kjaer (Lille)	2
Layvin Kurzawa (Monaco)	2
Maicon (Roma)	2
Kostas Manolas (Olympiakos)	2
Alberto Moreno (Sevilla)	2
Nicolas Pareja (Sevilla)	2
Rafinha (Bayern Munich)	2
Ricarco Rodriguez (Wolfsburg)	2
Luke Shaw (Southampton)	2
John Terry (Chelsea)	2
Adriano (Barcelona)	1
Daniel Agger (Liverpool)	1
Jordi Alba (Barcelona)	1
Alvaro Arbeloa (Real Madrid)	1
Sebastian Boenisch (Bayer Leverkusen)	1
John Brooks (Hertha Berlin)	1
Paolo Cannavaro (Napoli)	1
Aly Cissokho (Liverpool)	1
Gael Clichy (Manchester City)	1
Danilo (Porto)	1
Mathieu Debuchy (Newcastle United)	1
Martin Demichelis (Manchester City)	1
Lorenzo De Silvestri (Sampdoria)	1
Lucas Digne (Paris Saint-Germain)	1
Jon Flanagan (Liverpool)	1
Christoph Jallet (Paris Saint-Germain)	1
Glen Johnson (Liverpool)	1
Aleksandar Kolarov (Manchester City)	1
Christian Maggio (Napoli)	1
Naldo (Werder Bremen)	1
Maxi Pereira (Benfica)	1
Andrea Ranocchia (Internazionale)	1
Darijo Srna (Shakhtar Donetsk)	1
Neven Subotic (Borussia Dortmund)	1
Vasilis Torosidis (Roma)	1
Benot Tremoulinas (Saint-Etienne)	1
Ricardo Van Rhijn (Ajax)	1
Kyle Walker (Tottenham Hotspur)	1
Kurt Zouma (Saint-Etienne)	1

MIDFIELDERS

Yaya Toure (Manchester City)	27
Philipp Lahm (Bayern Munich)	25
Gareth Bale (Real Madrid)	21
Arturo Vidal (Juventus)	21
Aaron Ramsey (Arsenal)	19
Mesut Ozil (Arsenal)	16
Paul Pogba (Juventus)	16
Angel Di Maria (Real Madrid)	15
Luka Modric (Real Madrid)	14
Koke (Atletico Madrid)	13
Marco Reus (Borussia Dortmund)	12
Franck Ribery (Bayern Munich)	13
Eden Hazard (Chelsea)	12
Gabi (Atletico Madrid)	9
Andrea Pirlo (Juventus)	9
Mario Gotze (Bayern Munich)	7
Andres Iniesta (Barcelona)	7
Toni Kroos (Bayern Munich)	6
Miralem Pjanic (Roma)	6

Steven Gerrard (Liverpool)	5
Isco (Real Madrid)	5
Ivan Rakitic (Sevilla)	5
Bastian Schweinsteiger (Bayern Munich)	5
Arda Turan (Atletico Madrid)	5
Marco Verratti (Paris Saint-Germain)	5
Daniele De Rossi (Roma)	4
Cesc Fabregas (Barcelona)	4
Jack Wilshere (Arsenal)	4
Thiago Alcantara (Bayern Munich)	3
Xabi Alonso (Real Madrid)	3
Santi Cazorla (Arsenal)	3
Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool)	3
Henrikh Mkhitaryan (Borussia Dortmund)	3
Nuri Sahin (Borussia Dortmund)	3
Fernandinho (Manchester City)	2
Raul Garcia (Atletico Madrid)	2
Blaise Matuidi (Paris Saint-Germain)	2
Thomas Muller (Bayern Munich)	2
Jesus Navas (Manchester City)	2
Oscar (Chelsea)	2
Ramires (Chelsea)	2
Kevin Strootman (Roma)	2
Tiago (Atletico Madrid)	2
Theo Walcott (Arsenal)	2
Jose Callejon (Napoli)	1
Emre Can (Bayer Leverkusen)	1
William Carvalho (Sporting Lisbon)	1
Christian Eriksen (Tottenham Hotspur)	1
Marek Hamsik (Napoli)	1
Jordan Henderson (Liverpool)	1
Kaka (Milan)	1
Leandro (Olympiakos)	1
Javi Martinez (Bayern Munich)	1
Juan Mata (Manchester United)	1
Stephane Mbia (Sevilla)	1
Dries Mertens (Napoli)	1
Radja Nainggolan (Roma)	1
Samir Nasri (Manchester City)	1
Marco Pavolo (Parma)	1
Ricardo Quaresma (Porto)	1
James Rodriguez (Monaco)	1
Mohamed Salah (Basle/Chelsea)	1
Wesley Sneijder (Galatasaray)	1
Oliver Torres (Atletico Madrid)	1
Borja Valero (Fiorentina)	1
Xavi (Barcelona)	1

FORWARDS

Cristiano Ronaldo (Real Madrid)	55
Luis Suarez (Liverpool)	47
Zlatan Ibrahimovic (Paris Saint-Germain)	42
Diego Costa (Atletico Madrid)	32
Lionel Messi (Barcelona)	28
Sergio Aguero (Manchester City)	11
Arjen Robben (Bayern Munich)	11
Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool)	11
Alvaro Negredo (Manchester City)	8
Neymar (Barcelona)	7
Wayne Rooney (Manchester United)	7
Raheem Sterling (Liverpool)	6
Radamel Falcao (Monaco)	5
Ciro Immobile (Torino)	5
Carlos Tevez (Juventus)	5
Edin Dzeko (Manchester City)	4
Robert Lewandowski (Borussia Dortmund)	4
Pedro (Barcelona)	4
Karim Benzema (Real Madrid)	3
Samuel Eto'o (Chelsea)	3
Alexis Sanchez (Barcelona)	3
Francesco Totti (Roma)	3
Antonio Di Natale (Udinese)	2
Antoine Griezmann (Real Sociedad)	2
Jese (Real Madrid)	2
Fernando Llorente (Juventus)	2
Kostas Mitroglou (Olympiakos/Fulham)	2
Luca Toni (Verona)	2
Emmanuel Adebayor (Tottenham Hotspur)	1
Ricardo Alvarez (Internazionale)	1
Carlos Bacca (Sevilla)	1
Domenico Berardi (Sassuolo)	1
Dimitar Berbatov (Monaco)	1
Fabio Borini (Sunderland)	1
Edinson Cavani (Paris Saint-Germain)	1
Gervinho (Roma)	1
Olivier Giroud (Arsenal)	1
Adam Johnson (Sunderland)	1
Alexandre Lacazette (Lyon)	1
Lima (Benfica)	1
Mario Mandzukic (Bayern Munich)	1
Adrian Ramos (Hertha Berlin)	1
Rodrigo (Benfica)	1
Fernando Torres (Chelsea)	1
David Villa (Atletico Madrid)	1

ESM – EUROPEAN SPORTS MEDIA

The members of ESM are: *A Bola* (Portugal), *Elf* (Holland), *Fanatik* (Turkey), *Frankfurter Allegmeine Zeitung* (Germany), *Goal News* (Greece), *Kicker* (Germany), *Marca* (Spain), *Nemzeti Sport* (Hungary), *So Foot* (France), *Sport* (Belgium), *Sport Express* (Russia), *De Telegraaf* (Holland), *TIPSbladet* (Denmark), *World Soccer* (England)

More details of votes at worldsoccer.com/votes

ESM TEAM OF THE SEASON

(based on number of appearances in the Team of the Month)

End of season review

Austria

HOW TITLE WAS WON

Salzburg led from start to finish, scoring a record-breaking 110 goals in 36 matches, finishing with a goal difference of 75 and wrapping up the title with a record eight matches to spare.

CUP WINNERS

A 4-2 victory over second-tier St Polten saw **Salzburg** complete the double as they scored 34 goals in their six games in the competition.

WHO ELSE QUALIFIED FOR EUROPE

Cup runners-up **St Polten** and league runners-up **Rapid Vienna** are joined in the Europa League by **Grodig**, who will play in Europe for the first time.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

After a slow start to their campaign, **Zrinjski Mostar** put together a run of eight straight wins to clinch their third title.

Sarajevo won their first silverware since 2007, beating Celik Zenica 5-1 on aggregate.

Siroki Brijeg (*right*) and **Zeljeznicar** go into the qualifying rounds of the Europa League.

Bulgaria

Ludogorets became the first side from outside Sofia to win three successive Bulgarian titles. In the past, only capital clubs CSKA and Levski had managed league hat-tricks.

A goal from Roman Bezjak saw **Ludogorets** complete a second domestic double in the space of three seasons with a 1-0 win against Botev Plovdiv.

CSKA Sofia (*right*), **Litex Lovech** and **Botev** qualified for the Europa League.

Croatia

Dinamo Zagreb won their ninth successive Croatian league title with four matches to spare.

Having previously won the Cup in 2005 and 2006, **Rijeka** won it again, beating Dinamo Zagreb 3-0 on aggregate.

The teams from Split, **Hajduk** and **RNK**, qualify for next year's Europa League.

Czech Republic

Vitezslav Lavicka's rejuvenated **Sparta Prague** squad dropped just seven points on their way to their first league title since 2010, clinching the championship three rounds before the end of the season and clocking up a record-breaking 79 points along the way.

Josef Husbauer scored a last-minute equaliser as **Sparta Prague** drew 1-1 with Viktoria Plzen and then won in a penalty shoot-out to complete the domestic double and win the Czech Cup for a 20th time

Viktoria Plzen (*right*) were second best to Sparta in the league and cup but will go into the Champions League next season. **Mlada Boleslav** and **Slovan Liberec** will play in the Europa League.

Denmark

Aab began the season by beating Copenhagen 2-1 and clinched their first league title since 2008 with a game to spare after winning 3-2 away to Midtjylland in March.

Just four days after claiming the Superliga title, **Aab** completed the double with a 4-2 defeat of Copenhagen.

Copenhagen picked up just three points from their first six games but won on the last day of the season to take the runners-up spot and the second Champions League place ahead of **Midtjylland**, who go into the Europa League with **Brondby** and **Esbjerg**.

WHO WERE RELEGATED/PROMOTED	PLAYER OF THE SEASON	COACH OF THE SEASON	NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
Wacker Innsbruck were relegated after four seasons in the top flight and will be replaced by **SCR Altach**.	Salzburg's captain, the Spaniard **Jonathan Soriano** finished the campaign as the league's top scorer with 31 goals.	After leading Grodig to third place in their first season in the top flight, **Adi Hutter** was rewarded with a contract at Salzburg.	Arriving on a free transfer from Liverpool, goalkeeper **Peter Gulacsi** kept 12 clean sheets in 31 appearances after quickly establishing himself as first choice with Salzburg.
Leotar Trebinje and **Rudar Prijedor** will be replaced by **Drina Zvornik** and **Sloboda Tuzla**.	Brazilian **Wagner** scored 18 goals to top the charts and help Siroki Brijeg to finish second.	After being appointed interim boss in April, **Dzenan Uscuplic** led Sarajevo to victory in the cup, winning seven and drawing one of his eight matches.	On loan from Liverpool, 19-year-old **Armin Hodzic** scored 14 goals in 28 matches for Zeljeznicar.
As the Bulgarian top flight is being reduced to 12 teams next season, **Chernomorets**, **Neftohimik**, **Pirin Gotse Delchev** and **Lyubimets** were relegated, with **Marek Dupnitsa** and **Haskovo** promoted.	Ludogorets keeper **Vladislav Stoyanov** was an important figure for the double winners and is apparently attracting the interest of Lazio in Italy.	In addition to winning the league and cup, **Stoycho Stoev** also took Ludogorets to the last 16 of the Europa League.	Colombian striker **Wilmar Jordan** arrived from South Korea in the summer and was the league's joint-top scorer with 20 goals for Litex.
Hrvatski Dragovoljac are relegated and replaced by **NK Zagreb**, while Slaven Belupo have to play off against second-tier runners-up Cibalia to preserve their place.	Dinamo Zagreb striker **Duje Cop** scored 22 goals in 33 league games for the champions.	Former Slovenia national coach **Matjaz Kek** has assembled a well-balanced side at Rijeka and led them to Cup success.	Hajduk Split's 19-year-old **Mario Pasalic** was named in Croatia's provisional World Cup squad and is reported to have agreed a deal to join Chelsea.
Little **Znojmo** and, less predictably, large provincial side **Sigma Olomouc** were relegated on a dramatic final day. Slavia Prague narrowly avoided their first relegation for 51 years, as did their neighbours Bohemians 1905. **Ceske Budejovice** and **Hradec Kralove** were promoted.	Remarkably for a midfielder, Sparta's **Josef Husbauer** ended up as the season's leading scorer with 18 goals. Capable of creating goals as well as taking them, the 24-year-old was a key member of the double-winning team and earned a return to the national side.	**Vitezslav Lavicka**'s painstaking overhaul of the Sparta squad finally reaped rewards for a club that had gone four long years without a trophy.	Loaned to Znojmo in the autumn, 21-year-old Slovak midfielder **Patrik Hrosovsky** impressed new Plzen coach Dusan Uhrin Jr enough to earn a return to his parent club in February.
Having looked to be well placed at the start of the winter break, **AGF** of Aarhus lost 10 in a row and went down with **Viborg**.	The 22-year-old striker **Kasper Kusk** scored 12 goals and had eight assists for the champions, Aab, playing his way into the national side.	One of the heroes of Euro 92, former Aston Villa defender **Kent Nielsen** has become an accomplished coach and inspired Aab to the domestic double with his no-nonsense leadership style.	Lithuanian striker **Lukas Spalvis** made a dramatic impact for Aab, scoring freely and getting two crucial goals in a 3-2 win away to Midtjylland.

End of season review

Georgia

HOW TITLE WAS WON

Reigning champions **Dinamo Tbilisi** retained the league, winning their 15th Georgian title on the penultimate day of the season by beating one of their main rivals, Sioni, 3-0 at home.

CUP WINNERS

Playing with 10 men for 70 minutes after the dismissal of George Rekhviashvili, **Dinamo Tbilisi** beat Chikhura Sachkhere 3-1 to complete a second successive double.

WHO ELSE QUALIFIED FOR EUROPE

Cup runners-up **Chikhura** Sachkhere join **Zestaponi** and **Sioni** in the Europa League.

Greece

Olympiakos beat Panthrakikos 2-0 in March to clinch their 41st league title with five games to spare. It was their fourth straight championship and their 16th in the last 18 years.

Panathinaikos beat PAOK 4-1 in the Final. Before the game, Panathinaikos supporters threw broken plastic seats at riot police and flares, firecrackers and other objects were thrown between opposing supporters.

Panathinaikos won the play-offs to join Olympiakos in the Champions League with **PAOK** (*right*), **Atromitos** and **Asteras Tripolis** going into the Europa League.

Hungary

Debrecen claimed a seventh title in 10 seasons with a narrow win over Puskas Akademia at Felcsut. Both clubs enjoy the financial backing of ruling party Fidesz, and both have recently opened new stadiums.

Diosgyor equalised in stoppage time against **Ujpest**, only to lose out to the troubled Budapest club 4-3 on penalties.

With Ujpest having failed yo obtain a UEFA licence, their place in the Europa League went to cup runners-up **Diosgyor**. League runners-up **Gyor** and **Ferencvaros** also qualified.

Macedonia

In the country's most exciting title-race ever, two points separated the top four teams with four games to play before **Rabotnicki**'s young side triumphed.

Playing in their fifth Final in seven years, 2008 and 2009 winners **Rabotnicki** beat city rivals Metalurg Skopje 2-0 with goals in either half from Borce Manevski, with a penalty, and Petar Petrov after Oliver Peev was sent off for Metalurg.

Turnovo, **Metalurg** and **Shkendija** will enter the Europa League in the first qualifying round.

Malta

Having trailed Birkirkara for most of the campaign, **Valletta** claimed the title by winning 12 of their final 16 games.

Valletta completed the double with a 1-0 victory over Sliema Wanderers, thanks to a goal from former England Under-17 striker Lateef Elford-Alliyu.

Cup runners-up **Sliema Wanderers** qualify for the Europa League, along with **Birkirkara** and **Hibernians**.

Moldova

Sheriff claimed their 13th title in 14 years with 15 points more then Tiraspol.

Sheriff were denied the double as **Zimbru Chisinau** won 3-1 to pick up their first silverware in seven years.

Tiraspol are joined in the Europa League by **Veris**, who finished third in their first season in the top flight.

WHO WERE RELEGATED/PROMOTED	PLAYER OF THE SEASON	COACH OF THE SEASON	NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
Merani and **Zugdidi** (*left*) drop down to the second tier.	Spanish winger **Xisco** was the league's top scorer, with 19 goals for Dinamo Tbilisi.	Dinamo Tbilisi's **Malkhaz Zhvania** won his first league title – and then followed it up with the Georgian Cup.	Zestaponi's 21-year-old Brazilian midfielder **Rene Ferreira** made his mark in central defence.
Aris and **Apollon** will be replaced by **Kerkyra** and **Niki Volos** from the second tier, while Skoda Xanthi are involved in a play-off.	**Marcus Berg**'s 15 goals and seven assists in 29 matches helped Panathinaikos to finish fourth in the regular season, and first in the play-offs.	In his first year as a coach, 41-year-old **Yannis Anastasiou** took a young (average age 22) and untested Panathinaikos to top spot in the play-offs and a place in the Champions League qualification round.	French-born 25-year-old Comorian forward **El Fardou Ben Nabouhane** single-handedly kept Veria in the Super League with his 15 goals in 33 games.
Kaposvar and **Mezokovesd** should drop down to the second tier, although there is talk of the current 16-team NBI expanding to 18 teams, which could earn both sides a reprieve.	With a goal every other game, 20-year-old **Andras Rado** broke through for Haladas. The bright attacking midfielder is also knocking at the door of the national team.	Elemer Kondas may have coached Debrecen to the title but Gyor's **Ferenc Horvath** pushed him to the wire. Taking over in December, when the 2013 champions had not only lost Attila Pinter but were out of title contention, Horvath galvanised Gyor as genuine championship challengers.	Attacking midfielder **David Markvart** shone for money-troubled Pecs. The 19-year-old played a near full season and set up a hatful of chances in the process.
With the league reduced from 12 to 10 teams next term, **Gorno Lisice**, **Makedonij**, **Napredok** and **Gostivar** drop out, while **Sileks** and **Teteks** (*left, in blue*) go up.	At 29, **Borce Manevski** was Rabotnicki's most experienced player and he grabbed some crucial goals for his side, finishing as the league's second-top scorer with 17.	Not only did **Igor Angelovski** win the double, he also did it in style with an exciting young side.	Vardar's 19-year-old winger **Jasir Asani** scored seven goals in eight matches in the second half of the season before getting injured.
Vittoriosa Stars and **Rabat Ajax** were relegated and replaced by **Pieta Hotspurs** and **Zebbug Rangers**.	Valletta captain **Ryan Fenech** provided the champions with leadership from midfield.	After taking charge at the turn of the year, **Andre Paus** led Valletta on an impressive run that ended with a league and cup double.	Attacking midfielder **Leighton Grech** joined Qormi on loan from Birkirkara and ended the season with his first call-up for the national team.
Rapid, who withdrew from the league in the winter, and **Speranta** dropped out of the top flight.	Brasilian-born **Henrique Luvannor**, who has now been capped by his adopted country, was the league's top scorer with 26 goals.	After starting the season at Costuleni, **Lilian Popescu** then moved to Veris and led them into Europe.	Costuleni's 20-year-old central defender **Alexandr Cucerenco** is one to keep an eye on.

End of season review

Montenegro

HOW TITLE WAS WON

Sutjeska became the first side to successfully defend the league championship. Top virtually all season, they only secured the title on the last day of the season.

CUP WINNERS

Lovcen celebrated their centenary season by winning their first major trophy, beating Mladost Podgorica 1-0 with a goal from Drasko Bozovic.

WHO ELSE QUALIFIED FOR EUROPE

Celik Niksic and **Buducnost Podgorica** join league runners-up Lovcen in the Europa League.

Northern Ireland

Cliftonville demonstrated that the previous season's success was no flash in the pan. They overcame a faltering start to show dogged determination and character, as well as the flair and verve which had characterised their triumph 12 months earlier.

A goal 14 minutes from time from substitute Mark Patton gave **Glenavon** a 2-1 victory over Ballymena United to secure European football for the first time in 13 years.

Linfield (*in blue*) and **Crusaders** (*stripes*) join Glenavon in the qualifying rounds of the Europa League.

Poland

Playing in the new two-section championship, **Legia Warsaw** dominated the competition and retained their title.

Zawisza Bydgoszcz will play in Europe for the first time after beating Zaglebie Lubin on penalties. Zawisza goalkeeper Wojciech Kaczmarek saved from Djordje Cotra and Sebastian Bonecki in the shoot-out, before Igor Lewczuk converted in sudden death to secure the club's first major silverware.

League runners-up **Lech Poznan** and **Ruch Chorzow** go into the Europa League.

Romania

Steaua Bucharest extended their domestic record by becoming champions for a 25th time, although they failed to complete the season unbeaten – as they did in 1987, 1988 and 1989 – after a 1-0 home loss to Vaslui in April.

Astra Giurgui beat Steaua on penalties after a 0-0 draw to win their first major trophy.

Third-place **Petrolul Ploiesti** go into the Europa League, where they will be joined by **CFR Cluj**, who take the place of Dinamo Bucharest, who filed for insolvency and therefore didn't get a UEFA licence.

Scotland

Celtic won a third successive championship – and 45th in total – with seven games to spare; the earliest the league has been won since Rangers' 1929 title stroll.

St Johnstone won the Cup for the first time in their 130-year history, beating Dundee United 2-0 in the Final.

There were Europa League places for **Motherwell** and **Aberdeen**.

Serbia

In spite of their financial woes and tension off the pitch, **Red Star Belgrade** won their first league title for six years.

Vojvodina celebrated their centenary by winning the Serbian Cup for the first time, gaining revenge for last season's Final defeat by beating holders Jagodina 2-0 at Belgrade's Partizan stadium. Enver Alivodic and Srdan Babic were the scorers, with Aleksandar Pesic missing a penalty for Jagodina.

Partizan (*right*) and **Jagodina** will take part in the Europa League qualifiers.

WHO WERE RELEGATED/PROMOTED	PLAYER OF THE SEASON	COACH OF THE SEASON	NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
Bottom-placed **Decic** were relegated and replaced by **Bokelj**.	Grbalj midfielder **Branislav Jankovic** forced his way in to the national side.	**Mojas Radonjic** led Lovcen to victory in the Cup Final and second place in the league.	Japanese striker **Masato Fukui** impressed with consistent performances and scored some decisive goals for Sutjeska.
Last season's Championship 1 winners **Ards** found the going too tough in the top flight, winning just six league games. They will be replaced next term by **Institute** from Londonderry.	As a taker and maker of chances, **Joe Gormley** played a vital role in Cliftonville's title success. His understanding with strike partner Liam Boyce saw the pair score over half the Reds' 88 goals. Cliftonville only failed to find the net in three of their 38 league games.	Despite the pressure of retaining the title, Cliftonville's **Tommy Breslin** managed to put out a team which oozed confidence and swagger.	A 19-year-old full-back, Glenavon's **Rhys Marshall** possesses a maturity beyond his years and played an important role in his club's Irish Cup success. He broke into the first team at the start of the season and became a permanent fixture.
Widzew Lodz and **Zaglebie Lubin** were relegated, with **Gornik Leczna** and **GKS Belchatow** replacing them.	Legia's versatile forward or midfielder **Miroslav Radovic** had a fine season.	Slovak coach **Jan Kocian** did well to finish third with Ruch Chorzow.	Zawisza Bydgoszcz midfielder **Michal Maslowski** was the best new arrival on the scene.
Despite finishing fifth, **Vaslui** failed to get a licence for next season and were relegated, along with **Poli Timisoara**, **Sageata Navodari** and **Corona Brasov**. They are replaced by **Studentesc Iaci**, **Clinceni**, **ASA Targu Mures** and **CSU Craiova**.	Brazilian midfielder **Eric Pereira** finished joint-fourth in the scoring charts, with 11 goals in 17 starts, despite leaving Pandurii Targu Jiu in January.	**Laurentiu Reghecampf** led Steaua to back-to-back titles before leaving to take charge of Saudi Arabia's Al Hilal and being replaced by Constantin Galca.	Viitorul Constanta's 16-year-old defender **Cristian Manea** became the youngest senior international in Romania's history, making his debut against Albania in May.
It was a tough season for fans in Edinburgh as **Hearts**, who started the season with minus 15 points for entering administration, and went down with city rivals **Hibernian**. **Dundee** and **Hamilton** (*left*) went up.	Celtic striker **Kris Commons** scored 23 times as his side had the league wrapped up in March.	In his first full season in charge, **Derek McInnes** led Aberdeen to the League Cup – their first trophy since 1995.	Dundee United's 20-year-old left-back **Andrew Robertson** earned a first Scotland cap in March.
Javor Ivanjica and **Sloboda Uzice** were relegated, while Rad must play-off against Metalac. **Mladost Lucani** and **Borac Cacak** went up.	Red Star's experienced striker **Dragan Mrdja** was not only the league's top scorer with 19 goals, he also contributed many assists. His performances earned a recall to the national team.	**Mladen Dodic** guided Jagodina to third place in the league and the Cup Final.	Midfielder **Sergej Milinkovic-Savic** helped Serbia win the European under-19 title and also became a regular in Vojvodina's first team.

End of season review

Slovakia

HOW TITLE WAS WON

Slovan Bratislava overcame a late run of poor form to claim their fourth title in six seasons. They slipped up twice against nearest challengers Trencin – who themselves lost twice to Ruzomberok, allowing the title-holders to maintain a healthy lead.

CUP WINNERS

Slovan missed out on the double despite scoring an early goal in the Final against **MFK Kosice**. Under former Schalke and Czech Republic star Radoslav Latal, Kosice stormed back to win 2-1 and take the trophy for the first time since 2009.

WHO ELSE QUALIFIED FOR EUROPE

League runners-up **Trencin** and third-place **Spartak Trnava** (*right, in stripes*) go into the Europa League.

Slovenia

Maribor romped to their fourth title in a row, scoring more than 75 goals and gaining huge victories over Koper, Celje and Krka. They were a team made up of stalwart veterans and budding young stars.

Double winners for the previous two seasons, Maribor were beaten 2-0 in the Final by two late goals from **Gorica** substitute Francesco Finocchio. It was Gorica's third cup crown in their history and their first in 12 years.

Koper and **Rudar** go into the first qualifying round of the Europa League.

Switzerland

Basle became the first team to win five successive domestic titles, although their overall total of 17 is still 10 short of Grasshoppers' record of 27.

Basle survived 40 minutes with 10 men before a second red card ended their hopes as Mario Gavranovic earned **Zurich** (*right*) a 2-0 extra-time win.

Grasshoppers, as league runners-up, go into the Champions League third qualifying round, while **Young Boys**, who finished third, and fourth-placed **Lucerne** will play in the Europa League qualifiers.

Turkey

Fenerbahce won the title, but their Champions League place goes to Galatasaray due to a match fixing suspension.

Wesley Sneijder scored as **Galatasaray** beat Eskisehirspor 1-0. Roberto Mancini, a cup-winning coach with five different teams in three different countries following Gala's success, has reached at least the semi-finals of the domestic cup in every season since he became a boss in 2002.

Besiktas go into the Champions League, while, **Trabzonspor** and **Sivasspor** join **Eskisehirspor** in the Europa League.

Ukraine

Despite losing home and away to nearest challengers Dnipro, **Shakhtar Donetsk** won their fifth title in a row in an inconsistent campaign.

Dynamo Kiev ended a five-year wait for a trophy by beating Shakhtar Donetsk 2-1, earning caretaker coach Serhiy Rebrov a full-time contract.

Dnipro go into the Champions League, while **Metalist Kharkiv**, **Dynamo Kiev** and **Chornomorets** enter the Europa League. Metalurh Donetsk, who should also have qualified, are appealing against their exclusion for failing to comply with financial fairplay regulations.

Wales

The New Saints won their third Welsh Premier League title in a row, giving them a record-breaking eighth championship to beat the previous record of seven that they shared with Barry Town. They won the title by a margin of 14 points with four matches to spare.

The New Saints completed the domestic double for the second time in three years, coming from 2-0 down with 17 minutes left against Aberystwyth Town in the Final. TNS snatched victory with two goals from Greg Draper and a winner, three minutes from time, from Michael Wilde.

League runners-up **Airbus UK Broughton** qualified for next season's Europa League, along with cup finalists **Aberystwyth Town** – who get their place thanks to TNS going into the Champions League – and **Bangor City** who, despite losing 9-1 at home to TNS in the league, won the play-offs.

WHO WERE RELEGATED/PROMOTED	PLAYER OF THE SEASON	COACH OF THE SEASON	NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
Hapless **Nitra** were unable to take advantage of a six-point penalty imposed on relegation rivals DAC Dunajska Streda and will play in the second flight next season. They will be replaced by **Sport Podbrezova**.	It was a triumphant return for **Robert Vittek**, the hero of Slovakia's 2010 World Cup campaign. The 32-year-old notched a string of vital goals in the title run-in and ended up Slovan's top scorer.	Former national coach **Dusan Galis** returned to Slovan at the start of the season and steered the champions to a successful defence of their title.	Nippy forward **Adam Zrelak** only made his debut for Ruzomberok in the spring of 2013 but he was already stepping out for the national side by November. Turning 20 in May, Zrelak pushed his club close to a European spot.
Despite a surprise victory at Maribor, **Triglav** were relegated with the heaviest goals-against tally. **Krka** must play-off with either Radomlje or Aluminij to maintain their top-flight spot.	Putting in another title-winning performance over the season, Maribor captian **Marcos Tavares** was in fine form.	A player for Maribor in the 1990s, **Ante Simundza** returned to take on the toughest job in Slovene football in 2013 – and succeeded.	Coping with the pressure of being the son of the most famous personality in Slovene football, 18-year-old **Luka Zahovic** stepped out of his father Zlatko's shadow to put in a dozen impressive performances for Maribor in the spring of 2014.
Relegation was a one-horse race as **Lausanne-Sport** finished 17 points adrift at the bottom after a terrible season. They are replaced by **Vaduz**, who are actually based in Liechtenstein.	With 13 goals and seven assists, international midfielder **Valentin Stocker** was the heart and soul of Basle's fifth straight title. He will play in the Bundesliga for Hertha Berlin next season.	**Murat Yakin** surprisingly quit as coach of Basle after a season in which the champions lost just twice in the league and went on a 28-match unbeaten run that lasted from early August until the start of May.	Following a mid-term move from Maccabi Tel Aviv, Israel under-21 striker **Moanes Dabour** – who is of Arab lineage – proved himself an irresistible finisher and creator for Grasshoppers.
Kayserispor, **Antalyaspor** and **Elazigspor** were relegated. They were replaced by second-tier champions **Istanbul BB**, runners-up **Balikesirspor** and play-off winners **Mersin Idmanyurdu**.	Back in Turkey after a spell with CSKA Moscow, left-winger **Caner Erkin** created a stream of chances for Fenerbahce.	Even though his budget was less than half that of Galatasaray and Fenerbahce, **Slaven Bilic**'s Besiktas proved they could compete with the big two.	Former Arsenal youth-team midfielder **Oguzhan Ozyakup** of Besiktas is a star in the making for the national side.
Tavriya Simferopol are relegated, while **Arsenal Kiev** have been liquidated.	**Junior Moraes** of Metalurh Donetsk scored 19 goals, a total only topped by Shakhtar Donetsk's Luiz Adriano.	**Roman Hryhorchuk** of Chornomorets.	A Ukrainian Cup winner with Dynamo Kiev, **Dieumerci Mbokani** also scored 15 goals in his first season after arriving from Anderlecht.
Afan Lido were relegated after just two season back in the top flight and will be replaced by **Cefn Druids**, who won the northern feeder league title. No clubs qualified for a domestic licence in the south, handing 11th-placed Prestatyn Town a reprieve.	Despite being a midfielder, **Chris Venables** of Aberystwyth Town scored 24 goals and won the league's Golden Boot.	The league's youngest manager until Jarred Harvey took over at Port Talbot in May, **Ian Hughes** developed Aberystwyth Town into a close-knit squad with high fitness and an excellent team spirit. Their fast, open passing game won them many admirers.	Aged 23, **Lewis Short** of Airbus UK Broughton is a fast, skilful left-sided midfielder.

ALBANIA

Four on the trot

Skenderbeu claimed a fourth successive Albanian Superliga title – and fifth in total –with two matches to spare. The club's Croatian striker Pero Pejic finished as the league's top scorer with 19 goals.

League runners-up Kukesi were also second best in the Albanian Cup, losing 1-0 to Arber Abilaliaj's goal for Flamurtari.

ANDORRA

Third time lucky

Runners-up for the past two seasons, FC Santa Coloma will compete in the first qualifying round of the Champions League after winning the Primera Divisio for a seventh time. Second-place UE Santa Coloma will enter the Europa League in the first qualifying round.

ARMENIA

Maiden championship

Banants won their first-ever Armenian title, clinching the championship with a game to spare following a 1-0 victory over Pyunik.

Pyunik won the Armenian Cup for a record seventh time as Kamo Hovhannisyan and Sargis Baloyan scored in a 2-1 win against Gandzasar. Narek Beglaryan replied for the first-time finalists.

AZERBAIJAN

Coaching success

Gurban Gurbanov became only the second man – following in the footsteps

Title-winning boss...Gurbanov

Club Results

EUROPE

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Quarter-finals

1st legs

Apr 1
Barcelona (Spa) 1 (Neymar 71)
Atletico Madrid (Spa) 1 (Diego 56)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 79,941. **Ref:** Brych (Ger)
Barcelona: Pinto - Daniel Alves, Pique (Bartra 12), Mascherano, Jordi Alba, Busquets, Xavi, Fabregas (Sanchez 68), Iniesta, Neymar, Messi.
Atletico: Courtois - Juanfran, Miranda, Godin, Filipe Luis, Gabi, Tiago, Arda (Rodriguez 77), Koke, Diego Costa (Diego 30), Villa (Sosa 71).

Apr 1
Manchester United (Eng) 1 (Vidic 58)
Bayern Munich (Ger) 1 (Schweinsteiger 67)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 75,199. **Ref:** Velasco Carballo (Spa)
Man Utd: De Gea - Jones, Ferdinand, Vidic, Buttner (Young 74), Fellaini, Carrick, Giggs (Kagawa 46), Valencia, Welbeck (Hernandez 85), Rooney.
Bayern: Neuer - Rafinha, Javi Martinez, Boateng, Alaba, Lahm, Schweinsteiger, Kroos (Gotze 74), Robben, Ribery, Muller (Mandzukic 63).
Sent off: Schweinsteiger 90min.

Apr 2
Paris Saint-Germain (Fra) 3 (Lavezzi 4, David Luiz og 61, Pastore 90+3)
Chelsea (Eng) 1 (Hazard pen 27)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 45,517. **Ref:** Mazic (Ser)
PSG: Sirigu - Jallet, Alex, Thiago Silva, Maxwell, Verratti (Cabaye 76), Thiago Motta, Matuidi, Cavani, Ibrahimovic (Lucas Moura 69), Lavezzi (Pastore 85).
Chelsea: Cech - Ivanovic, Cahill, Terry, Azpilicueta, Ramires, David Luiz, Willian, Oscar (Lampard 73), Hazard, Schurrle (Fernando Torres 59).

Apr 2
Real Madrid (Spa) 3 (Bale 3, Isco 27, Cristiano Ronaldo 57)
Borussia Dortmund (Ger) 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 70,089. **Ref:** Clattenburg (Eng)
Real Madrid: Casillas - Carvajal, Pepe, Sergio Ramos, Fabio Coentrao, Xabi Alonso, Modric, Isco (Illarramendi 72), Bale, Cristiano Ronaldo (Casemiro 80), Benzema (Morata 75).
Dortmund: Weidenfeller - Piszczek (Schieber 67), Papastathopoulos, Hummels, Durm, Kehl (Jojic 74), Sahin, Reus, Mkhitaryan (Hofmann 64), Grosskreutz, Aubameyang.

2nd legs

Apr 8
Borussia Dortmund 2 (Reus 24, 37)
Real Madrid 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 65,829. **Ref:** Skomina (Sln)
Real Madrid 3-2 on agg
Dortmund: Weidenfeller - Piszczek (Aubameyang 82), Friedrich, Hummels, Durm, Kirch, Mkhitaryan, Jojic, Reus, Grosskreutz, Lewandowski.
Real Madrid: Casillas - Carvajal, Pepe, Sergio Ramos, Fabio Coentrao, Xabi Alonso, Illarramendi (Isco 46), Modric, Di Maria (Casemiro 73), Bale, Benzema (Varane 90+2).

Apr 8
Chelsea 2 (Schurrle 32, Ba 87)
Paris Saint-Germain 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 38,080. **Ref:** Proenca (Por)
Agg 3-3; Chelsea on away goals
Chelsea: Cech - Ivanovic, Cahill, Terry, Azpilicueta, David Luiz, Lampard (Ba 66), Willian, Oscar (Fernando Torres 81), Hazard (Schurrle 18), Eto'o.
PSG: Sirigu - Jallet, Alex, Thiago Silva, Maxwell, Verratti (Cabaye 55), Thiago Motta, Matuidi, Lucas Moura (Marquinhos 85), Cavani, Lavezzi (Pastore 73).

Apr 9
Atletico Madrid 1 (Koke 5)
Barcelona 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 53,592. **Ref:** Webb (Eng)
Atletico Madrid 2-1 on agg
Atletico: Courtois - Juanfran, Miranda, Godin, Filipe Luis, Raul Garcia, Gabi, Tiago, Koke, Adrian (Diego 62), Villa (Rodriguez 79).
Barcelona: Pinto - Daniel Alves, Bartra, Mascherano, Jordi Alba, Xavi, Busquets, Iniesta (Pedro 72), Messi, Fabregas (Sanchez 61), Neymar.

Apr 9
Bayern Munich 3 (Mandzukic 59, Muller 68, Robben 76)
Manchester United 1 (Evra 57)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 67,300. **Ref:** Eriksson (Swe)
Bayern Munich 4-2 on agg
Bayern: Neuer - Lahm, Boateng, Dante, Alaba, Kroos, Robben, Gotze (Rafinha 65), Muller (Pizarro 84), Ribery, Mandzukic.
Man Utd: De Gea - Jones, Smalling, Vidic, Evra, Fletcher (Hernandez 75), Carrick, Valencia, Kagawa, Welbeck (Januzaj 81), Rooney.

Semi-finals

1st legs

Apr 22
Atletico Madrid 0
Chelsea 0
Att: 52,560. **Ref:** Eriksson (Swe)
Atletico: Courtois - Juanfran, Miranda, Godin, Filipe Luis, Gabi, Mario Suarez (Sosa 79), Raul Garcia (Villa 86), Koke, Diego (Arda 60), Diego Costa.
Chelsea: Cech (Schwarzer 18) - Azpilicueta, Cahill, Terry (Schurrle 73), Cole, Mikel, David Luiz, Lampard, Ramires, Willian (Ba 90+4), Fernando Torres.

Apr 23
Real Madrid 1 (Benzema 19)
Bayern Munich 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 79,283. **Ref:** Webb (Eng)
Real Madrid: Casillas - Carvajal, Sergio Ramos, Pepe (Varane 73), Fabio Coentrao, Modric, Xabi Alonso, Di Maria, Isco (Illarramendi 82), Cristiano Ronaldo (Bale 73), Benzema.
Bayern: Neuer - Rafinha (Javi Martinez 66), Boateng, Dante, Alaba, Schweinsteiger (Muller 74), Lahm, Kroos, Robben, Ribery (Gotze 72), Mandzukic.

2nd legs

Apr 29
Bayern Munich 0
Real Madrid 4 (Sergio Ramos 16, 20, Cristiano Ronaldo 34, 90)
HT: 0-3. **Att:** 68,000. **Ref:** Proenca (Por)
Real Madrid 5-0 on agg
Bayern: Neuer - Lahm, Boateng, Dante, Alaba, Schweinsteiger, Kroos, Robben, Muller (Pizarro 72), Ribery (Gotze 72), Mandzukic (Javi Martinez 46).
Real Madrid: Casillas - Carvajal, Pepe, Sergio Ramos (Varane 75), Fabio Coentrao, Modric, Xabi Alonso, Di Maria (Casemiro 84), Bale, Benzema (Isco 80), Cristiano Ronaldo.

Apr 30
Chelsea 1 (Fernando Torres 36)
Atletico Madrid 3 (Adrian 44, Diego Costa pen 60, Arda 72)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 37,918. **Ref:** Rizzoli (Ita)
Atletico Madrid 3-1 on agg
Chelsea: Schwarzer - Ivanovic, Cahill, Terry, Cole (Eto'o 54), Ramires, David Luiz, Azpilicueta, Willian (Schurrle 77), Hazard, Fernando Torres (Ba 67).
Atletico: Courtois - Juanfran, Miranda, Godin, Filipe Luis, Mario Suarez, Tiago, Arda (Rodriguez 84), Koke, Diego Costa (Sosa 76), Adrian (Raul Garcia 66).

Final

May 24 - Lisbon (Da Luz)
Real Madrid 4 (Sergio Ramos 90+3, Bale 110, Marcelo 118, Cristiano Ronaldo pen 120)
Atletico Madrid 1 (Godin 36)
Aet. **HT:** 0-1. **90mins:** 1-1. **Att:** 60,976.
Ref: Kuipers (Hol)
Real Madrid: Casillas - Carvajal, Varane, Sergio Ramos, Fabio Coentrao (Marcelo 59), Khedira (Isco 59), Modric, Di Maria, Bale, Cristiano Ronaldo, Benzema (Morata 79).
Atletico: Courtois - Juanfran, Miranda, Godin, Filipe Luis (Alderweireld 83), Gabi, Tiago, Raul Garcia (Sosa 66), Koke, Diego Costa (Adrian 9), Villa.

EUROPA LEAGUE

Quarter-finals

1st legs - Apr 3; 2nd legs - Apr 10
AZ Alkmaar (Hol) v Benfica (Por) 0-1, 0-2 (agg 0-3)
Basle (Swi) v Valencia (Spa) 3-0, 0-5 (aet) (agg 3-5)
Lyon (Fra) v Juventus (Ita) 0-1, 1-2 (agg 1-3)
Porto (Por) v Sevilla (Spa) 1-0, 1-4 (agg 2-4)

Semi-finals

1st legs - Apr 24; 2nd legs - May 1
Benfica v Juventus 2-1, 0-0 (agg 2-1)
Sevilla v Valencia 2-0, 1-3
(agg 3-3, Sevilla on away goals)

Final

May 14 - Turin (Juventus)
Sevilla 0
Benfica 0
Aet. **Att:** 33,120. **Ref:** Brych (Ger)
Sevilla 4-2 on pens
Sevilla: Beto - Coke, Pareja, Fazio, Moreno, Mbia, Carrico, Reyes (Marin 78; Gameiro 104), Rakitic, Vitolo (Figueiras 110), Bacca.
Benfica: Oblak - Pereira, Luisao, Garay, Siqueira (Cardozo 99), Andre Gomes, Ruben Amorim, Gaitan (Ivan Cavaleiro 119), Sulejmani (Andre Almeida 25), Lima, Rodrigo.

AUSTRIA

Apr 5: Grodig 1 Salzburg 3; Sturm 1 Admira 1; Wacker 0 Wolfsberger 1; Wiener Neustadt 1 Ried 1.
Apr 6: Austria 0 Rapid 1.
Apr 12: Salzburg 1 Sturm 2; Wolfsberger 1 Grodig 2; Ried 1 Wacker 2; Rapid 0 Admira 0.
Apr 13: Wiener Neustadt 0 Austria 2.
Apr 19: Austria 3 Wolfsberger 1; Sturm 2 Ried 1; Wacker 3 Wiener Neustadt 1; Admira 2 Salzburg 3.
Apr 20: Grodig 2 Rapid 2.
Apr 26: Ried 3 Admira 0; Wiener Neustadt 1 Grodig 3; Rapid 2 Salzburg 1; Wacker 1 Austria 1.
Apr 27: Wolfsberger 0 Sturm 1.
May 4: Salzburg 4 Ried 0; Rapid 2 Wacker 0; Admira 1 Wolfsberger 0; Sturm 1 Wiener Neustadt 2; Grodig 2 Austria 1.
May 11: Wacker 3 Grodig 3; Austria 1 Sturm 2; Ried 2 Rapid 5; Wolfsberger 2 Salzburg 0.
May 12: Wiener Neustadt 5 Admira 2.

AUSTRIA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Salzburg (C)	36	25	5	6	110	35	80
Rapid	36	17	11	8	63	40	62
Grodig	36	15	9	12	68	71	54
Austria	36	14	11	11	58	44	53
Sturm	36	13	9	14	55	55	48
Ried	36	10	13	13	55	66	43
Wolfsberger	36	11	8	17	50	63	41
W Neustadt	36	10	9	17	43	84	39
Admira[1]	36	11	9	16	51	67	37
Wacker (R)	36	5	14	17	42	70	29

[1]5pts deducted for breaching licensing regulations

BELGIUM

Division split after 30-round regular season; top 6 formed championship group, 7th to 14th entered Europa League-place play-offs, 15th & 16th (bottom 2) entered relegation play-off series

Championship group

Apr 4: Zulte Waregem 2 Standard 0.
Apr 5: Lokeren 1 Genk 1.
Apr 6: Anderlecht 3 Club Brugge 0.
Apr 11: Lokeren 1 Anderlecht 2.
Apr 12: Zulte Waregem 2 Club Brugge 1.
Apr 13: Genk 2 Standard 2.
Apr 15: Anderlecht 0 Zulte Waregem 0.
Apr 16: Club Brugge 2 Genk 0.
Apr 17: Standard 2 Lokeren 2.
Apr 20: Lokeren 3 Zulte Waregem 2.
Apr 21: Club Brugge 0 Standard 0; Genk 1 Anderlecht 0.
Apr 25: Zulte Waregem 2 Genk 2.
Apr 26: Lokeren 1 Club Brugge 3.
Apr 27: Anderlecht 2 Standard 1.
May 2: Standard 4 Zulte Waregem 1.
May 3: Genk 1 Lokeren 2.
May 4: Club Brugge 0 Anderlecht 1.
May 10: Zulte Waregem 3 Lokeren 1.
May 11: Standard 0 Club Brugge 1; Anderlecht 4 Genk 0.
May 15: Zulte Waregem 1 Anderlecht 2; Genk 3 Club Brugge 2; Lokeren 1 Standard 3.
May 18: Club Brugge 2 Zulte Waregem 0; Anderlecht 3 Lokeren 1; Standard 1 Genk 0.

BELGIUM – CHAMPIONSHIP GROUP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Anderlecht (C)	10	7	1	2	17	6	51
Standard	10	4	3	3	14	11	49
Club Brugge	10	5	1	4	16	11	48
Zulte Waregem	10	4	2	4	16	15	41
Lokeren	10	2	2	6	14	25	34
Genk	10	2	3	5	10	19	32

Teams carried forward half the points (rounded up) gained in the regular season

Relegation play-off series

RELEGATION PLAY-OFF SERIES – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
OH Leuven[1] (R)[2]	3	2	1	0	5	1	10
Mons (R)	3	0	1	2	1	5	1

[1]OH Leuven received 3 bonus points for finishing above Mons in the regular season table
[2]As relegation play-off series winners, OH Leuven went into the rel/prom play-offs group, which they failed to win, meaning they were also relegated

of Arif Asadov – to claim the Azerbaijan title as a player and a coach after leading Qarabag to their first Azerbaijani Premier League title for 21 years.

"We have been waiting for this day for a very long time" said Gurbanov, who has been in charge of the club since 2008. Victory for Qarabag ended Neftci's three-year reign as domestic champions.

Neftci did, however, retain the Azerbaijan Cup, beating Qabala on penalties following a 1-1 draw.

"We wanted to claim the double once again but failed, and Neftci can never be allowed to finish the season empty-handed," said coach Boyukagha Hajiyev.

BELARUS

One goal seals it

Artem Starhorodskyi scored the only goal of the game as Shakhtyor Soligorsk beat Neman Grodno 1-0 in the Belarusian Cup Final.

CYPRUS

Final win for APOEL

APOEL secured a record-extending 20th Cypriot Cup, beating Ermis Aradippou 2-0 with goals from Tomas De Vincenti and Cillian Sheridan.

Victorious...APOEL of Nicosia

963 games Ryan Giggs played for Manchester United before his retirement in May

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zrinjski (C)	30	18	7	5	56	21	61
Siroki Brijeg	30	17	8	5	66	23	59
Sarajevo	30	16	10	4	45	21	58
Zeljeznicar	30	16	9	5	51	29	57
Velez	30	15	9	6	42	23	54
Borac	30	13	6	11	39	32	45
Celik	30	10	13	7	35	32	43
Olimpic	30	10	11	9	39	30	41
Vitez	30	10	6	14	34	39	36
Radnik	30	10	6	14	34	50	36
Mladost VO	30	8	9	13	24	38	33
Travnik	30	7	10	13	31	44	31
Slavija[1]	30	9	7	14	27	43	31
Zvijezda	30	9	4	17	25	49	31
Rudar P'dor (R)	30	5	12	13	24	39	27
Leotar (R)	30	2	3	25	11	70	9

[1]3pts deducted because of unpaid debt

BULGARIA

Division split after 26-round regular season; teams carried forward full regular-season record

BULGARIA – CHAMPIONSHIP GROUP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ludogorets (C)	38	25	9	4	74	20	84
CSKA	38	21	9	8	56	20	72
Lovech	38	21	9	8	74	37	72
Botev Plovdiv	38	18	11	9	57	32	65
Levski	38	19	5	14	59	39	62
Cherno More	38	14	12	12	40	33	54
Lok Plovdiv	38	15	5	18	49	55	50

BULGARIA – RELEGATION GROUP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Beroe	38	21	7	10	58	29	70
Slavia	38	16	7	15	57	46	55
Lok Sofia	38	16	6	16	46	52	54
Chernom's (R)	38	13	5	20	56	62	44
Neftochimic (R)	38	7	4	27	26	92	25
Pirin GD (R)	38	6	4	28	35	91	22
Lyubimets (R)	38	6	3	29	25	104	21

CROATIA

CROATIA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dinamo (C)	36	26	6	4	83	26	84
Rijeka	36	21	10	5	72	35	73
Hajduk	36	17	11	8	58	44	62
Split	36	14	10	12	41	41	52
Lokomotiva	36	15	7	14	57	59	52
Istra	36	12	8	16	45	56	44
Zadar	36	10	5	21	35	67	35
Osijek	36	8	9	19	38	62	33
Slaven[1]	36	7	11	18	46	65	32
H Drag'jac (R)	36	7	9	20	41	61	30

[1]Slaven stay in top division after winning rel/prom play-off

CZECH REPUBLIC

Apr 4: Teplice 1 Pribram 0.
Apr 5: Liberec 3 Ostrava 2; Dukla 0 Plzen 3.
Apr 6: Znojmo 1 Brno 1; Olomouc 2 Bohemians 1905 1; Jihlava 2 Mlada Boleslav 1; Slovacko 0 Sparta 1.
Apr 8: Slavia 0 Jablonec 0.
Apr 11: Bohemians 1905 3 Teplice 1.
Apr 12: Sparta 3 Slavia 0; Pribram 3 Liberec 1; Ostrava 0 Slovacko 1.
Apr 13: Plzen 1 Jihlava 1; Jablonec 1 Dukla 4; Mlada Boleslav 5 Znojmo 1.
Apr 14: Brno 2 Olomouc 0.
Apr 18: Jihlava 1 Bohemians 1905 1.
Apr 19: Znojmo 0 Ostrava 4; Liberec 2 Slovacko 1; Mlada Boleslav 3 Jablonec 2.
Apr 20: Teplice 0 Brno 1; Olomouc 0 Pribram 0; Dukla 1 Sparta 3.
Apr 21: Slavia 0 Plzen 2.
Apr 25: Plzen 3 Teplice 0.
Apr 26: Ostrava 2 Dukla 0; Slovacko 3 Olomouc 1; Sparta 4 Liberec 1.
Apr 27: Jablonec 3 Jihlava 0; Brno 1 Mlada Boleslav 1; Bohemians 1905 0 Slavia 1.
Apr 28: Pribram 1 Znojmo 1.
May 2: Slavia 3 Pribram 0; Dukla 1 Slovacko 1.
May 3: Znojmo 4 Liberec 1; Teplice 3 Sparta 1.
May 4: Jihlava 2 Brno 1; Jablonec 2 Plzen 2; Mlada Boleslav 1 Bohemians 1905 0.
May 5: Olomouc 2 Ostrava 3.
May 9: Bohemians 1905 3 Dukla 2.
May 10: Liberec 2 Teplice 1; Pribram 3 Jablonec 0; Ostrava 3 Jihlava 1; Slovacko 2 Znojmo 0.
May 11: Sparta 5 Olomouc 0; Brno 2 Slavia 0; Plzen 2 Mlada Boleslav 0.
May 25: Jablonec 1 Bohemians 1905 2; Plzen 1 Brno 1; Jihlava 3 Pribram 0; Mlada Boleslav 0 Sparta 4; Teplice 0 Ostrava 0; Slavia 1 Slovacko 1; Dukla 0 Liberec 1; Olomouc 2 Znojmo 0.
May 31: Znojmo 0 Dukla 2; Liberec 1 Olomouc 1; Slovacko 0 Teplice 2; Ostrava 2 Slavia 0; Sparta 4 Jihlava 1; Pribram 3 Mlada Boleslav 1; Brno 1 Jablonec 0; Bohemians 1905 0 Plzen 0.

CZECH REPUBLIC – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sparta (C)	30	25	4	1	78	19	79
Plzen	30	19	9	2	64	21	66
M Boleslav	30	14	8	8	54	38	50
Liberec	30	14	6	10	37	46	48
Teplice	30	13	7	10	51	35	46
Slovacko	30	11	7	12	43	40	40
Dukla	30	10	8	12	35	37	38
Jihlava	30	10	7	13	45	50	37
Brno	30	10	7	13	32	42	37
Ostrava	30	8	11	11	33	43	35
Jablonec	30	9	7	14	43	53	34
Pribram	30	9	7	14	34	49	34
Slavia	30	8	6	16	24	51	30
Boh'ians 1905	30	7	9	14	26	40	30
Olomouc (R)	30	7	8	15	42	60	29
Znojmo (R)	30	6	9	15	32	49	27

DENMARK

Apr 4: AGF 0 Randers 1.
Apr 5: Midtjylland 2 AaB 3.
Apr 6: Viborg 2 OB 2; Copenhagen 2 SonderjyskE 0; Brondby 1 Esbjerg 0.
Apr 7: Vestsjaelland 0 Nordsjaelland 0.
Apr 11: SonderjyskE 1 Vestsjaelland 1.
Apr 12: Midtjylland 0 OB 2.
Apr 13: Randers 3 Viborg 1; Copenhagen 1 AGF 0; AaB 2 Brondby 0.
Apr 14: Nordsjaelland 0 Esbjerg 1.
Apr 16: Viborg 0 AaB 2.
Apr 17: OB 0 Nordsjaelland 1; Esbjerg 2 Randers 2; Vestsjaelland 0 Copenhagen 1.
Apr 18: Brondby 3 SonderjyskE 1; AGF 0 Midtjylland 4.
Apr 20: Vestsjaelland 1 OB 0; AaB 1 Randers 2.
Apr 21: SonderjyskE 3 Nordsjaelland 1; Midtjylland 5 Viborg 2; AGF 1 Brondby 2; Copenhagen 2 Esbjerg 2.
Apr 25: Randers 1 SonderjyskE 1.
Apr 26: OB 2 AaB 3.
Apr 27: Viborg 3 AGF 0; Brondby 2 Vestsjaelland 2; Nordsjaelland 1 Copenhagen 0.
Apr 28: Esbjerg 0 Midtjylland 0.
May 2: Randers 0 Nordsjaelland 1.
May 3: AaB 0 Esbjerg 2.
May 4: SonderjyskE 1 Viborg 0; Midtjylland 3 Vestsjaelland 1; Copenhagen 1 Brondby 1.
May 5: AGF 0 OB 1.
May 7: Esbjerg 2 SonderjyskE 1; Nordsjaelland 2 AaB 4.
May 8: Viborg 0 Copenhagen 2; OB 2 Randers 1; Brondby 3 Midtjylland 1; Vestsjaelland 2 AGF 1.
May 11: Viborg 1 Nordsjaelland 3; Brondby 1 Randers 1; Vestsjaelland 0 AaB 0; AGF 0 SonderjyskE 3; Midtjylland 2 Copenhagen 3; OB 1 Esbjerg 2.
May 18: Copenhagen 3 OB 2; SonderjyskE 3 Midtjylland 1; AaB 1 AGF 0; Randers 1 Vestsjaelland 1; Nordsjaelland 2 Brondby 2; Esbjerg 0 Viborg 0.

DENMARK – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
AaB (C)	33	18	8	7	60	38	62
Copenhagen	33	15	11	7	54	38	56
Midtjylland	33	16	7	10	61	38	55
Brondby	33	13	13	7	47	38	52
Esbjerg	33	13	9	11	47	38	48
Nordsjaelland	33	13	7	13	38	44	46
Randers	33	9	14	10	41	45	41
OB	33	10	10	13	47	46	40
Vestsjaelland	33	8	14	11	31	42	38
SonderjyskE	33	10	8	15	41	53	38
AGF (R)	33	9	5	19	38	60	32
Viborg (R)	33	6	10	17	38	63	28

ENGLAND

Saturday, April 5

Aston Villa 1 (Holt 70)
Fulham 2 (Richardson 61, Rodallega 86)
Att: 33,532

Cardiff 0
Crystal Palace 3 (Puncheon 31, 88, Ledley 71)
Att: 27,687

Chelsea 3 (Salah 32, Lampard 61, Willian 72)
Stoke 0 Att: 41,168

Hull 1 (Boyd 39)
Swansea 0 Att: 22,744

Manchester City 4 (Toure pen 3, Nasri 45+1, Dzeko 45+4, Jovetic 81)
Southampton 1 (Lambert pen 37) Att: 47,009

Newcastle 0
Manchester United 4 (Mata 39, 50, Hernandez 64, Januzaj 90+3) Att: 52,081

Norwich 0
West Bromwich 1 (Amalfitano 16) Att: 26,859

Sunday, April 6

Everton 3 (Naismith 14, Lukaku 34, Arteta og 61)
Arsenal 0 Att: 39,504

West Ham 1 (Demel 45+2)
Liverpool 2 (Gerrard pen 44, pen 71) Att: 34,977

Monday, April 7

Tottenham 5 (Adebayor 28, 86, Kane 59, Eriksen 78, Sigurdsson 90+2)
Sunderland 1 (Cattermole 17) Att: 34,410

Saturday, April 12

Crystal Palace 1 (Puncheon 76)
Aston Villa 0 Att: 25,564

Fulham 1 (Rodallega 40)
Norwich 0 Att: 25,028

Southampton 0
Cardiff 1 (Cala 65) Att: 30,526

Stoke 1 (Pieters 42)
Newcastle 0 Att: 27,400

Sunderland 0
Everton 1 (Brown og 75) Att: 38,445

West Bromwich 3 (Vydra 1, Brunt 4, Sessegnon 31)
Tottenham 3 (Olsson og 34, Kane 70, Eriksen 90+4) Att: 25,398

Sunday, April 13

Liverpool 3 (Sterling 6, Skrtel 26, Coutinho 78)
Manchester City 2 (Silva 57, Johnson og 62)
Att: 44,601

Swansea 0
Chelsea 1 (Ba 68) Att: 20,761

Tuesday, April 15

Arsenal 3 (Podolski 44, 78, Giroud 55)
West Ham 1 (Jarvis 40) Att: 59,977

Wednesday, April 16

Everton 2 (Naismith 61, Mirallas 86)
Crystal Palace 3 (Puncheon 23, Dann 49, Jerome 73) Att: 39,333

Manchester City 2 (Fernandinho 2, Nasri 88)
Sunderland 2 (Wickham 73, 83) Att: 47,046

Saturday, April 19

Aston Villa 0
Southampton 0 Att: 35,134

Cardiff 1 (Whittingham pen 51)
Stoke 1 (Arnautovic pen 45+3) Att: 27,686

Chelsea 1 (Eto'o 12)
Sunderland 2 (Wickham 18, Borini pen 82)
Att: 41,210

Newcastle 1 (Shola Ameobi 23)
Swansea 2 (Bony 45+1, pen 90+2) Att: 51,057

Tottenham 3 (Paulinho 35, Kane 48, Kaboul 62)
Fulham 1 (Sidwell 37) Att: 35,841

West Ham 0
Crystal Palace 1 (Jedinak pen 59) Att: 34,977

Sunday, April 20

Everton 2 (Baines pen 28, Mirallas 43)
Manchester United 0 Att: 39,436

Hull 0
Arsenal 3 (Ramsey 31, Podolski 45, 54) Att: 24,762

Norwich 2 (Hooper 54, Snodgrass 77)
Liverpool 3 (Sterling 4, 62, Suarez 11) Att: 26,857

Monday, April 21

Manchester City 3 (Zabaleta 3, Aguero 10, Demichelis 36)
West Bromwich 1 (Dorrans 16) Att: 46,564

Saturday, April 26

Fulham 2 (Dejagah 55, Amorebieta 58)
Hull 2 (Jelavic 75, Long 87) Att: 25,700

ESTONIA

League now cup

Having won their eighth league title last autumn, Levadia added the Estonian Cup with a 4-0 victory over third-tier Tartu Santos in the Final. Vladislav Ivanov (twice), Ingemar Teever and Heiko Tamm were on target for the Talinn-based side.

GIBRALTAR

Imps into Europe

Lincoln Red Imps will be Gibraltar's first-ever representatives in the Champions League next season after they completed the domestic league-and-cup double for a 14th time.

ICELAND

Super start for KR

KR beat Fram 2-0 in the season-opening Icelandic Super Cup. Kjartan Henry Finnbogason and Emil Atlason were on target for the reigning league champions against last season's Icelandic Cup winners. Fram are now coached by Bjarni Gudjonsson, who captained KR to the title last term.

ISRAEL

Holders defend title

Maccabi Tel Aviv retained the Israeli title with a 2-1 win at second-placed Hapoel Beer Sheva, while Kiryat Shmona won the Israeli Cup for the first time thanks to Ahmed Abed's extra-time winner against second-tier Maccabi Netanya in the Final. The beaten finalists had the

1 female coach in Europe's top leagues after French second-tier side Clermont appointed 36-year-old Portuguese Helena Costa

Manchester United 4 (Rooney pen 41, 48, Mata 63, 73)
Norwich 0 Att: 75,208

Southampton 2 (Alcaraz og 1, Coleman og 31)
Everton 0 Att: 31,313

Stoke 0
Tottenham 1 (Rose 33) Att: 26,021

Swansea 4 (Bony 10, pen 90+4, Shelvey 26, Pablo 73)
Aston Villa 1 (Agbonlahor 22) Att: 20,701

West Bromwich 1 (Berahino 11)
West Ham 0 Att: 26,541

Sunday, April 27
Crystal Palace 0
Manchester City 2 (Dzeko 4, Toure 43) Att: 24,769

Liverpool 0
Chelsea 2 (Ba 45+3, Willian 90+4) Att: 44,726

Sunderland 4 (Wickham 26, 86, Borini pen 45+1, Giaccherini 76)
Cardiff 0 Att: 42,397

Monday, April 28
Arsenal 3 (Koscielny 26, Ozil 42, Giroud 66)
Newcastle 0 Att: 60,023

Saturday, May 3
Aston Villa 3 (Westwood 1, Weimann 41, 45+3)
Hull 1 (Bowery og 28) Att: 37,182

Everton 2 (Barkley 11, Lukaku 65)
Manchester City 3 (Aguero 22, Dzeko 43, 48) Att: 39,454

Manchester United 0
Sunderland 1 (Larsson 30) Att: 75,347

Newcastle 3 (Shola Ameobi 18, Remy 87, S Taylor 90+1)
Cardiff 0 Att: 50,239

Stoke 4 (Odemwingie 39, Arnautovic 54, Assaidi 73, Walters 82)
Fulham 1 (Richardson 80) Att: 27,429

Swansea 0
Southampton 1 (Lambert 90+3) Att: 20,682

West Ham 2 (Kane og 27, Downing 44)
Tottenham 0 Att: 34,977

Sunday, May 4
Arsenal 1 (Giroud 14)
West Bromwich 0 Att: 60,021

Chelsea 0
Norwich 0 Att: 41,602

Monday, May 5
Crystal Palace 3 (Delaney 79, Gayle 81, 88)
Liverpool 3 (Allen 18, Sturridge 53, Suarez 55) Att: 25,261

Tuesday, May 6
Manchester United 3 (Wilson 31, 61, Van Persie 86)
Hull 1 (Fryatt 63) Att: 75,341

Wednesday, May 7
Manchester City 4 (Dzeko 64, 72, Jovetic 89, Toure 90+3)
Aston Villa 0 Att: 47,023

Sunderland 2 (Colback 13, Borini 31)
West Bromwich 0 Att: 45,181

Sunday, May 11
Cardiff 1 (Bellamy 15)
Chelsea 2 (Schurrle 72, Fernando Torres 75) Att: 27,716

Fulham 2 (Woodrow 61, David 90+4)
Crystal Palace 2 (Gayle 28, 83) Att: 24,447

Hull 0
Everton 2 (McCarthy 9, Lukaku 46) Att: 24,848

Liverpool 2 (Agger 63, Sturridge 65)
Newcastle 1 (Skrtel og 20) Att: 44,724

Manchester City 2 (Nasri 39, Kompany 49)
West Ham 0 Att: 47,300

Norwich 0
Arsenal 2 (Ramsey 53, Jenkinson 62) Att: 26,848

Southampton 1 (Lambert 28)
Manchester United 1 (Mata 54) Att: 31,372

Sunderland 1 (Borini 50)
Swansea 3 (Dyer 7, Emnes 14, Bony 54) Att: 45,580

Tottenham 3 (Paulinho 14, Baker og 35, Adebayor pen 38)
Aston Villa 0 Att: 35,826

West Bromwich 1 (Sessegnon 56)
Stoke 2 (McAuley og 22, Adam 87) Att: 26,613

ENGLAND – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man City (C)	38	27	5	6	102	37	86
Liverpool	38	26	6	6	101	50	84
Chelsea	38	25	7	6	71	27	82
Arsenal	38	24	7	7	68	41	79
Everton	38	21	9	8	61	39	72
Tottenham	38	21	6	11	55	51	69
Man United	38	19	7	12	64	43	64
Southampton	38	15	11	12	54	46	56
Stoke	38	13	11	14	45	52	50
Newcastle	38	15	4	19	43	59	49
Crystal Palace	38	13	6	19	33	48	45
Swansea	38	11	9	18	54	54	42
West Ham	38	11	7	20	40	51	40
Sunderland	38	10	8	20	41	60	38
Aston Villa	38	10	8	20	39	61	38
Hull	38	10	7	21	38	53	37
West Brom	38	7	15	16	43	59	36
Norwich (R)	38	8	9	21	28	62	33
Fulham (R)	38	9	5	24	40	85	32
Cardiff (R)	38	7	9	22	32	74	30

Top goalscorers
31 Luis Suarez (Liverpool)
21 Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool)
20 Yaya Toure (Manchester City)
17 Sergio Aguero (Manchester City)
17 Wayne Rooney (Manchester United)

FA CUP

Semi-finals
Apr 12: Wigan 1 Arsenal 1 (aet, Arsenal 4-2 on pens).
Apr 13: Hull 5 Sheffield United 3.

Final
May 17 - London (Wembley)
Arsenal 3 (Cazorla 17, Koscielny 71, Ramsey 108)
Hull 2 (Chester 4, Davies 8)
Aet. **HT:** 1-2. **90mins:** 2-2. **Att:** 89,345. **Ref:** Probert

FRANCE

Friday, April 4
Marseille 3 (A Ayew 4, 60, 76)
AC Ajaccio 1 (Tallo 61) Att: 34,992

Saturday, April 5
Bastia 2 (Bruno 53, Cisse 68)
Sochaux 2 (Ayew 45, Corchia 45+1) Att: 12,442

Bordeaux 2 (Hoarau 37, Rolan 61)
Rennes 2 (Doucoure 64, Alessandrini 68) Att: 19,776

Guingamp 1 (Yatabare 61)
Montpellier 2 (Sorbon og 25, Stambouli 27) Att: 15,996

Lorient 1 (Aliadiere 6)
Evian TG 1 (Wass 70) Att: 15,496

Paris Saint-Germain 3 (Cavani 43, Mandi og 48, og 89)
Reims 0 Att: 46,440

Toulouse 1 (Aurier 90+3)
Lille 2 (Roux 26, Kalou pen 42) Att: 14,108

Sunday, April 6
Monaco 3 (Rodriguez 18, pen 76, Raggi 72)
Nantes 1 (Bedoya 78) Att: 6,164

Saint-Etienne 1 (Gradel pen 90+1)
Nice 1 (Bodmer 57) Att: 31,010

Valenciennes 1 (Waris 66)
Lyon 2 (Gomis 30, Ferri 69) Att: 13,922

Friday, April 11
Montpellier 2 (Cabella 48, Sanson 79)
Marseille 3 (Valbuena 42, Gignac 58, Payet 89) Att: 19,757

Saturday, April 12
AC Ajaccio 1 (Mostefa 85)
Bordeaux 1 (Jussie 62) Att: 6,319

Evian TG 2 (Benezet 35, Wass 48)
Bastia 1 (Raspentino 30) Att: 11,633

Lille 1 (Origi 70)
Valenciennes 0 Att: 37,757

Nice 1 (Kolodziejczak 30)
Lorient 2 (Sunu 19, Aboubakar 90+1) Att: 20,039

Rennes 0
Monaco 1 (Riviere 55) Att: 21,643

Sochaux 2 (Ayew 15, Contout 49)
Toulouse 0 Att: 11,663

Sunday, April 13
Lyon 1 (Ferri 31)
Paris Saint-Germain 0 Att: 38,096

Nantes 1 (Gakpe 4)
Guingamp 0 Att: 21,357

Reims 2 (Charbonnier 24, Signorino 50)
Saint-Etienne 2 (Brandao 51, Clerc 90+1) Att: 19,151

Friday, April 18
Saint-Etienne 0
Rennes 0 Att: 31,137

Sunday, April 20
Bastia 2 (Raspentino 32, Squillaci 88)
AC Ajaccio 1 (Camara 4) Att: 14,153

Bordeaux 5 (Diabate 8, 20, 26, Jussie 48, Rolan pen 68)
Guingamp 1 (Diallo 29) Att: 15,045

Lorient 4 (Aliadiere pen 31, Monnet-Paquet 87, Aboubakar 90, 90+3)
Montpellier 4 (Cabella 26, 81, Niang 57, Deza 78) Att: 16,019

Marseille 0
Lille 0 Att: 39,545

Monaco 1 (Berbatov 5)
Nice 0 Att: 8,500

Reims 0
Sochaux 1 (Corchia 41) Att: 14,493

Valenciennes 2 (Medjani 79, Bahebeck 83)
Nantes 6 (Audel 25, Bedoya 41, Gakpe 44, 54, Medjani og 86, Nicolita 89) Att: 13,972

Wednesday, April 23
Paris Saint-Germain 1 (Matuidi 89)
Evian TG 0 Att: 44,992

Toulouse 0
Lyon 0 Att: 12,104

Friday, April 25
Nantes 1 (Gakpe 64)
Marseille 1 (Thauvin 30) Att: 35,959

Saturday, April 26
AC Ajaccio 1 (Tallo 75)
Monaco 4 (Berbatov 53, 74, Kondogbia 89, Ocampos 90+2) Att: 6,622

Evian TG 1 (Wass 54)
Saint-Etienne 2 (Corgnet 7, Perrin 15) Att: 14,771

Guingamp 1 (Beauvue 61)
Valenciennes 0 Att: 16,717

Montpellier 2 (Ait-Fana 79, Cabella pen 83)
Toulouse 1 (Trejo 5) Att: 14,618

Nice 1 (Eysseric 51)
Reims 0 Att: 20,372

Rennes 1 (Ntep 73)
Lorient 1 (Traore 17) Att: 23,069

Sunday, April 27
Lille 2 (Kalou 23, Mendes 68)
Bordeaux 1 (Jussie pen 71) Att: 40,644

Lyon 4 (Gomis 14, Fekir 23, Kone 50, Lacazette 64)
Bastia 1 (Bruno 47) Att: 36,956

Sochaux 1 (Thiago Silva og 56)
Paris Saint-Germain 1 (Cavani 24) Att: 19,504

Friday, May 2
Bastia 1 (Khazri 85)
Lille 1 (Kalou 32) Att: 12,702

Sunday, May 4
Lorient 1 (Aliadiere 17)
AC Ajaccio 0 Att: 15,496

Marseille 4 (Diawara 14, Thauvin 26, Gignac 48, 57)
Lyon 2 (Mvuemba 40, Gomis 82) Att: 37,842

consolation of promotion back to the top flight as winners of the second division title.

LATVIA

Home success in cup

Jelgava won the first Latvian Cup Final to be staged in their home city, beating Skonto on penalties following a goalless draw after extra time. Romans Bespalovs' penalty in normal time was saved by Skonto goalkeeper Andrejs Pavlovs, before Boriss Bogdaskins scored the decisive spot-kick in the shoot-out.

LITHUANIA

Cup specialists

Zalgiris won the Lithuanian Cup for a third successive season, beating Banga 2-1 in the Final. Jakub Wilk and Linas Pilibaitis were their goalscorers, with Evaldas Grigaitis replying after the interval. They are only the second side to achieve such a feat, after Kelininkas Kaunas.

Zalgiris have now won the trophy a record eight times, while their veteran striker Andrius Velicka has five cup-winners medals.

Rock solid...Lincoln beat College Europa 1-0 in the Gibraltar Cup Final

Reims 1 (Oniangue 30)
Evian TG 0 Att: 13,014

Saint-Etienne 2 (Hamouma 47, Erdinc 57)
Montpellier 0 Att: 34,659

Sochaux 2 (Pejcinovic og 45, Ayew 56)
Nice 0 Att: 18,729

Toulouse 1 (Ben Yedder 67)
Nantes 1 (Vizcarrondo 9) Att: 21,200

Valenciennes 0
Bordeaux 1 (Faubert 74) Att: 12,784

Wednesday, May 7
Monaco 1 (Berbatov 77)
Guingamp 1 (Atik 85) Att: 7,683

Paris Saint-Germain 1 (Lavezzi 3)
Rennes 2 (Kadir 23, Ntep 27) Att: 45,625

Saturday, May 10
AC Ajaccio 2 (Tallo 3, Perozo 6)
Reims 1 (Oniangue 41) Att: 5,534

Bordeaux 1 (Diabate 66)
Marseille 1 (Cheyrou 31) Att: 31,555

Evian TG 2 (Berigaud 19, Benezet 77)
Nice 0 Att: 14,189

Guingamp 2 (Beauvue 5, Yatabare pen 14)
Toulouse 0 Att: 18,031

Lille 1 (Delaplace 90)
Paris Saint-Germain 3 (Marquinhos 41, Lucas Moura 65, Matuidi 82) Att: 48,960

Lyon 0
Lorient 1 (Doukoure 54) Att: 39,531

Montpellier 0
Bastia 2 (Yatabare 45+2, Khazri 72) Att: 13,969

Nantes 1 (Gakpe 82)
Saint-Etienne 3 (Erdinc 10, 45+2, Gradel pen 23) Att: 36,609

Rennes 1 (Ntep 72)
Sochaux 2 (Ayew 33, Mayuka 78) Att: 15,228

Valenciennes 1 (Doumbia 70)
Monaco 2 (Germain 40, Dirar 87) Att: 13,006

Saturday, May 17
Bastia 0
Nantes 0 Att: 14,994

Lorient 1 (Aliadiere 22)
Lille 4 (Kalou 32, 65, Roux 52, Bourillon og 90+2) Att: 16,593

Marseille 1 (A Ayew 51)
Guingamp 0 Att: 36,020

Monaco 1 (Ocampos 69)
Bordeaux 1 (Hoarau 15) Att: 7,896

Nice 0
Lyon 1 (Kone 6) Att: 28,405

Paris Saint-Germain 4 (Lavezzi 2, Ibrahimovic 20, Lucas Moura 49, Rabiot 88)
Montpellier 0 Att: 46,206

Reims 1 (Diego 82)
Rennes 3 (Doucoure 34, Toivonen 54, Ntep 59) Att: 15,053

Saint-Etienne 3 (Perrin 19, 77, Erdinc 35)
AC Ajaccio 1 (Baradji 90+2) Att: 37,201

Sochaux 0
Evian TG 3 (Wass 8, 72, Angoula 42) Att: 19,905

Toulouse 3 (Ben Yedder 30, pen 45, 90+1)
Valenciennes 1 (Le Tallec 87) Att: 20,183

FRANCE – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
PSG (C)	38	27	8	3	84	23	89
Monaco	38	23	11	4	63	31	80
Lille	38	20	11	7	46	26	71
Saint-Etienne	38	20	9	9	56	34	69
Lyon	38	17	10	11	56	44	61
Marseille	38	16	12	10	53	40	60
Bordeaux	38	13	14	11	49	43	53
Lorient	38	13	10	15	48	53	49
Toulouse	38	12	13	13	46	53	49
Bastia	38	13	10	15	42	56	49
Reims	38	12	12	14	44	52	48
Rennes	38	11	13	14	47	45	46
Nantes	38	12	10	16	38	43	46
Evian TG	38	11	11	16	39	51	44
Montpellier	38	8	18	12	45	53	42
Guingamp	38	11	9	18	34	42	42
Nice	38	12	6	20	30	44	42
Sochaux (R)	38	10	10	18	37	61	40
Valenc'nes (R)	38	7	8	23	37	65	29
AC Ajaccio (R)	38	4	11	23	37	72	23

Top goalscorers

26 Zlatan Ibrahimovic (Paris Saint-Germain)
16 Vincent Aboubakar (Lorient)
16 Wissam Ben Yedder (Toulouse)
16 Edinson Cavani (Paris Saint-Germain)
16 Andre-Pierre Gignac (Marseille)
16 Salomon Kalou (Lille)

FRENCH CUP

Semi-finals

Apr 15: Rennes 3 Angers 2.
Apr 16: Guingamp 3 Monaco 1 (aet).

Final

May 3 - Paris (Stade de France)
Rennes 0
Guingamp 2 (Martins Pereira 37, Yatabare 46)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 80,000. **Ref:** Chapron

LEAGUE CUP

Final

Apr 19 - Paris (Stade de France)
Paris Saint-Germain 2 (Cavani 4, pen 32)
Lyon 1 (Lacazette 56)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 78,489. **Ref:** Lannoy

GERMANY

Friday, April 4
Hamburg 2 (Calhanoglu 4, Westermann 82)
Bayer Leverkusen 1 (Brandt 58) Att: 49,575

Saturday, April 5
Augsburg 1 (Molders 31)
Bayern Munich 0 Att: 30,660

Borussia Dortmund 2 (Lewandowski 51, Reus 77)
Wolfsburg 1 (Olic 34) Att: 80,000

Eintracht Frankfurt 2 (Joselu 52, Meier 85)
Mainz 0 Att: 50,400

Nuremberg 0
Monchengladbach 2 (Arango 18, Kruse pen 79) Att: 50,000

Stuttgart 2 (Maxim 69, Harnik 89)
Freiburg 0 Att: 58,500

Werder Bremen 1 (Di Santo 15)
Schalke 1 (Goretzka 33) Att: 42,100

Sunday, April 6
Eintracht Braunschweig 3 (Kumbela 14, Nielsen 21, Hochscheidt 89)
Hanover 0 Att: 22,867

Hertha Berlin 1 (Allagui 11)
Hoffenheim 1 (Polanski 30) Att: 43,874

Friday, April 11
Schalke 2 (Meyer 59, Farfan 90+1)
Eintracht Frankfurt 0 Att: 61,973

Saturday, April 12
Bayern Munich 0
Borussia Dortmund 3 (Mkhitaryan 20, Reus 49, Hofmann 56) Att: 71,000

Freiburg 2 (Vrancic og 8, Schuster 48)
Eintracht Braunschweig 0 Att: 24,000

Hanover 2 (Stindl 9, Ya Konan 86)
Hamburg 1 (Calhanoglu 48) Att: 49,000

Mainz 3 (Petersen og 5, Moritz 16, Malli 39)
Werder Bremen 0 Att: 33,597

Monchengladbach 1 (Arango 89)
Stuttgart 1 (Didavi 12) Att: 53,560

Wolfsburg 4 (Olic 19, Perisic 22, 82, Junior Malanda 69)
Nuremberg 1 (Feulner 8) Att: 28,431

Sunday, April 13
Bayer Leverkusen 2 (Kiessling 1, Brandt 24)
Hertha Berlin 1 (Wagner 38) Att: 29,377

Hoffenheim 2 (Salihovic 19, Vestergaard 41)
Augsburg 0 Att: 26,449

Thursday, April 17
Eintracht Frankfurt 2 (Lanig 13, Meier 68)
Hanover 3 (Andreasen 2, Stindl 20, Ya Konan 29) Att: 48,100

Saturday, April 19
Augsburg 0
Hertha Berlin 0 Att: 30,059

Borussia Dortmund 4 (Jojic 6, Lewandowski 18, Piszczek 56, Reus pen 79)
Mainz 2 (Okazaki 14, 53) Att: 80,500

Eintracht Braunschweig 0
Bayern Munich 2 (Pizarro 75, Mandzukic 86) Att: 23,325

Freiburg 4 (Mehmedi 51, 87, Sorg 71, Darida 72)
Monchengladbach 2 (Herrmann 9, Nordtveit 89) Att: 24,000

Hamburg 1 (Ilicevic 58)
Wolfsburg 3 (Perisic 2, De Bruyne 42, Olic 49) Att: 56,279

Werder Bremen 3 (Bargfrede 18, Garcia 78, Petersen 90+2)
Hoffenheim 1 (Volland 3) Att: 40,100

Sunday, April 20
Nuremberg 1 (Plattenhardt 26)
Bayer Leverkusen 4 (Spahic 16, 80, Boenisch 48, Hilbert 87) Att: 40,514

Stuttgart 3 (Harnik 23, 59, Cacau 54)
Schalke 1 (Szalai 69) Att: 60,000

Friday, April 25
Hanover 0
Stuttgart 0 Att: 49,000

Saturday, April 26
Bayer Leverkusen 2 (Bender 7, Castro 35)
Borussia Dortmund 2 (Kirch 29, Reus pen 39) Att: 30,210

Bayern Munich 5 (Ribery 20, Pizarro 53, 57, Schweinsteiger 61, Robben 74)
Werder Bremen 2 (Gebre Selassie 10, Hunt 36) Att: 71,000

Hertha Berlin 2 (Brooks 61, Allagui 77)
Eintracht Braunschweig 0 Att: 51,953

Hoffenheim 0
Eintracht Frankfurt 0 Att: 30,150

Mainz 2 (Okazaki 30, Moritz 44)
Nuremberg 0 Att: 33,507

Wolfsburg 2 (Perisic 3, 70)
Freiburg 2 (Mehmedi 61, Terrazzino 83) Att: 28,255

Sunday, April 27
Augsburg 3 (Altintop 7, 32, Hahn 42)
Hamburg 1 (Westermann 44) Att: 30,660

Schalke 0
Monchengladbach 1 (Herrmann 35) Att: 61,973

Saturday, May 3
Borussia Dortmund 3 (Grosskreutz 29, Mkhitaryan 31, Piszczek 34)
Hoffenheim 2 (Roberto Firmino 5, Sule 66) Att: 80,200

Eintracht Braunschweig 0
Augsburg 1 (Bobadilla 90+4) Att: 22,600

Eintracht Frankfurt 0
Bayer Leverkusen 2 (Castro 27, Can 36) Att: 51,000

Freiburg 0
Schalke 2 (Ayhan 13, Huntelaar 65) Att: 24,000

Hamburg 1 (Calhanoglu 72)
Bayern Munich 4 (Gotze 32, 70, Muller 55, Pizarro 75) Att: 57,000

Monchengladbach 3 (Stranzl 22, Kruse 54, Kramer 77)
Mainz 1 (Choupo-Moting 65) Att: 54,010

Nuremberg 0
Hanover 2 (Huszti 5, Schmiedebach 51) Att: 46,014

Stuttgart 1 (Gentner 62)
Wolfsburg 2 (De Bruyne 13, Olic 90+1) Att: 58,000

LUXEMBOURG

Dramatic last day

Dudelange beat Fola Esch 3-0 on the final day of the season to leapfrog their opponents at the top of the table and claim a 29th league championship.

The visitors, who had taken the title from Dudelange the previous season, only needed a draw to retain their title but they were undone by a hat-trick from Julien Jahier.

Dudelange missed out on the double as goals from Antonio Luisi and Geoffrey Franzoni gave Differdange a 2-0 win in the Luxembourg Cup Final.

History maker...Odegaard

NORWAY

Youngest-ever scorer

Already the youngest player ever to appear in the Norwegian top flight, Martin Odegaard became the league's youngest goalscorer, finding the net for Stromsgodset in their 4-1 win against Sarpsborg at the age of 15 years and 150 days.

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

All-Ireland success

Sligo Rovers won their sixth trophy in four years,

Irish champions...Baraclough

Werder Bremen 2 (Hunt 48, 90+1)
Hertha Berlin 0 Att: 42,100

Saturday, May 10

Augsburg 2 (Klavan 29, Hahn 80)
Eintracht Frankfurt 1 (Joselu 15) Att: 30,660

Bayer Leverkusen 2 (Toprak 34, Son 53)
Werder Bremen 1 (Gebre Selassie 21) Att: 30,210

Bayern Munich 1 (Pizarro 90+2)
Stuttgart 0 Att: 71,000

Hanover 3 (Huszti 45, Rudnevs 65, Prib 80)
Freiburg 2 (Schmid 50, Zulechner 78) Att: 48,600

Hertha Berlin 0
Borussia Dortmund 4 (Lewandowski 41, 80, Jojic 44, Mkhitaryan 82) Att: 76,197

Hoffenheim 3 (Rudy 15, Roberto Firmino 64, Volland 70)
Eintracht Braunschweig 1 (Hochscheidt 88) Att: 30,150

Mainz 3 (Soto 7, Malli 65, Okazaki 82)
Hamburg 2 (Lasogga 12, Ilicevic 84) Att: 34,000

Schalke 4 (Matip 6, Neustadter 45, Draxler 75, Obasi 90+2)
Nuremberg 1 (Drmic 90+1) Att: 61,973

Wolfsburg 3 (De Bruyne 30, Perisic 68, Knoche 81)
Monchengladbach 1 (Kramer 64) Att: 30,000

GERMANY – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bayern (C)	34	29	3	2	94	23	90
Dortmund	34	22	5	7	80	38	71
Schalke	34	19	7	8	63	43	64
Leverkusen	34	19	4	11	60	41	61
Wolfsburg	34	18	6	10	63	50	60
M'gladbach	34	16	7	11	59	43	55
Mainz	34	16	5	13	52	54	53
Augsburg	34	15	7	12	47	47	52
Hoffenheim	34	11	11	12	72	70	44
Hanover	34	12	6	16	46	59	42
Hertha	34	11	8	15	40	48	41
Werder	34	10	9	15	42	66	39
Frankfurt	34	9	9	16	40	57	36
Freiburg	34	9	9	16	43	61	36
Stuttgart	34	8	8	18	49	62	32
Hamburg[1]	34	7	6	21	51	75	27
Nuremberg (R)	34	5	11	18	37	70	26
Br'schweig (R)	34	6	7	21	29	60	25

[1]Hamburg stay in top division after winning their rel/prom play-off

Top goalscorers

20 Robert Lewandowski (Borussia Dortmund)
18 Mario Mandzukic (Bayern Munich)
17 Josip Drmic (Nuremberg)
16 Adrian Ramos (Hertha Berlin)
16 Marco Reus (Borussia Dortmund)
16 Roberto Firmino (Hoffenheim)

GERMAN CUP

Semi-finals

Apr 15: Borussia Dortmund 2 Wolfsburg 0.
Apr 16: Bayern Munich 5 Kaiserslautern 1.

Final

May 17 - Berlin (Olympiastadion)
Borussia Dortmund 0
Bayern Munich 2 (Robben 107, Muller 120+3)
Aet. **HT:** 0-0. **90mins:** 0-0. **Att:** 76,197. **Ref:** Meyer

GREECE

Apr 6: Panathinaikos 3 Levadiakos 1; Kalloni 2 Panthrakikos 0; OFI 3 Xanthi 2; Apollon 1 Ergotelis 0; Platanias 1 Panetolikos 0; Giannina 2 Olympiakos 0; Veria 2 Panionios 1; Asteras 2 Aris 2; PAOK 2 Atromitos 0.
Apr 13: Veria 1 Asteras 0; Aris 0 Giannina 0; Panionios 0 Platanias 0; Olympiakos 1 Apollon 0; Panetolikos 1 OFI 0; Ergotelis 3 Kalloni 0; Xanthi 3 Panathinaikos 1; Panthrakikos 1 Atromitos 3; Levadiakos 3 PAOK 2.

GREECE – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Olympiakos (C)	34	28	2	4	88	19	86
PAOK[1]	34	21	6	7	68	37	69
Atromitos[1]	34	19	9	6	54	25	66
Panathinaikos[1]	34	20	6	8	57	28	66
Asteras[1]	34	16	10	8	46	35	58
OFI	34	11	11	12	30	39	44
Ergotelis	34	11	11	12	39	40	44
Levadiakos	34	13	3	18	42	61	42
Panetolikos	34	11	9	14	32	33	42
Panthrakikos	34	11	8	15	39	52	41
Giannina	34	12	5	17	34	43	41
Kalloni	34	12	3	19	31	62	39
Panionios	34	10	9	15	33	42	39
Platanias	34	10	8	16	39	48	38
Veria	34	9	11	14	31	51	38
Xanthi[2]	34	11	5	18	44	54	38
Apollon (R)	34	9	9	16	43	54	36
Aris (R)	34	3	13	18	26	53	22

[1]The teams finishing 2nd to 5th played each other in a post-season play-off group, which Panathinaikos won to take Greece's 2nd Champions League place
[2]Xanthi enter rel/prom play-off

Top goalscorers

16 Esteban Solari (Xanthi)
15 El Fardou Ben Nabouhane (Veria)
15 Marcus Berg (Panathinaikos)
14 Kostas Mitroglou (Olympiakos)
14 Dimitris Papadopoulos (Atromitos)

GREEK CUP

Final

Apr 26 - Athens (Olympic)
PAOK 1 (Vukic pen 70)
Panathinaikos 4 (Berg 15, 50, 88, Karelis 54)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 44,356. **Ref:** Kakos

HOLLAND

Apr 2: Heracles 1 Feyenoord 2; Utrecht 1 Cambuur 0; Go Ahead Eagles 2 NAC 1; Twente 1 Den Haag 1; RKC 0 Ajax 2.
Apr 4: Zwolle 0 Groningen 1.
Apr 5: Heerenveen 3 PSV 0; NEC 1 Cambuur 1; NAC 0 Twente 2; Heracles 1 Go Ahead Eagles 2.
Apr 6: Den Haag 4 Utrecht 1; Vitesse 1 Ajax 1; Feyenoord 2 RKC 0; Roda JC 2 AZ 2.
Apr 11: Groningen 2 NAC 1.
Apr 12: Go Ahead Eagles 0 Heerenveen 2; Cambuur 4 Vitesse 3; Twente 3 Roda JC 0.
Apr 13: AZ 1 NEC 1; Utrecht 2 Heracles 1; RKC 1 Zwolle 1; Ajax 3 Den Haag 2; PSV 0 Feyenoord 2.
Apr 27: Heerenveen 4 Utrecht 1; Feyenoord 5 Cambuur 1; NAC 1 RKC 1; Zwolle 1 PSV 2; Heracles 1 Ajax 1; Vitesse 2 Go Ahead Eagles 2; NEC 2 Twente 5; Roda JC 1 Groningen 2; Den Haag 2 AZ 1.
May 3: Cambuur 1 Den Haag 2; Utrecht 2 Vitesse 1; AZ 1 Feyenoord 1; RKC 0 Heerenveen 3; Go Ahead Eagles 0 Roda JC 1; Ajax 2 NEC 2; PSV 2 NAC 0; Groningen 3 Heracles 1; Twente 2 Zwolle 2.

HOLLAND – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ajax (C)	34	20	11	3	69	28	71
Feyenoord	34	20	7	7	76	40	67
Twente	34	17	12	5	72	37	63
PSV	34	18	5	11	60	45	59
Heerenveen	34	16	9	9	72	51	57
Vitesse	34	15	10	9	65	49	55
Groningen	34	14	9	11	57	53	51
AZ	34	13	8	13	54	50	47
Den Haag	34	12	7	15	45	64	43
Utrecht	34	11	8	15	46	65	41
Zwolle	34	9	13	12	47	49	40
Cambuur	34	10	9	15	40	50	39
Go Ahead	34	10	8	16	45	69	38
Heracles	34	10	7	17	45	59	37
NAC	34	8	11	15	43	54	35
RKC (R)[1]	34	7	11	16	44	64	32
NEC (R)[1]	34	5	15	14	54	82	30
Roda JC (R)	34	7	8	19	44	69	29

[1]RKC & NEC both relegated after losing in the rel/prom play-offs

Top goalscorers

29 Alfred Finnbogason (Heerenveen)
23 Graziano Pelle (Feyenoord)
17 Aron Johannsson (AZ)
16 Dusan Tadic (Twente)
14 Luc Castaignos (Twente)
14 Michael Higdon (NEC)

DUTCH CUP

Final

Apr 20 - Rotterdam (Feyenoord)
Zwolle 5 (Thomas 8, 12, Fernandez 22, 34, Van Polen 50)
Ajax 1 (Van Rhijn 3)
HT: 4-1. **Att:** 42,500. **Ref:** Nijhuis

ISRAEL

Division split after 26-round regular season; teams carried forward full regular-season record

ISRAEL – CHAMPIONSHIP GROUP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Mac Tel Aviv (C)	36	26	6	4	76	30	84
Be'er Sheva	36	20	8	8	56	33	68
Kiryat Shmona	36	18	10	8	59	38	64
Hap Tel Aviv	36	16	10	10	72	47	58
Mac Haifa	36	15	8	13	49	46	53
Bnei Sakhnin	36	13	8	15	37	47	47

ISRAEL – RELEGATION GROUP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Beitar	33	12	6	15	31	32	42
Ashdod	33	10	9	14	35	45	39
Ra'anana	33	9	11	13	31	40	38
Acre	33	8	12	13	30	42	36
Hap Haifa	33	9	7	17	30	45	34
M Petah Tikva	33	8	9	16	39	57	33
R HaSharon (R)	33	9	6	18	29	59	33
Bnei Yehuda (R)	33	7	10	16	32	45	31

ITALY

Wednesday, April 2

Roma 4 (Gervinho 12, Totti 16, Pjanic 49, Taddei 82)
Parma 2 (Acquah 15, Biabiany 90) Att: 41,625

Saturday, April 5

Chievo 0
Verona 1 (Toni 65) Att: 11,000

Internazionale 2 (Icardi 6, 63)
Bologna 2 (Cristaldo 35, Kone 73) Att: 38,815

Sunday, April 6

Atalanta 0
Sassuolo 2 (Sansone 33, 71) Att: 18,576

Cagliari 1 (Pinilla pen 89)
Roma 3 (Destro 32, 56, 74) Att: 4,798

Catania 1 (Bergessio 2)
Torino 2 (Farnerud 79, Immobile 83) Att: 15,467

Fiorentina 2 (Cuadrado 25, Rodriguez pen 73)
Udinese 1 (Bruno Fernandes 82) Att: 31,073

Lazio 2 (Candreva 42, Lulic 73)
Sampdoria 0 Att: 27,319

Parma 1 (Parolo 55)
Napoli 0 Att: 14,743

Monday, April 7

Genoa 1 (Abbiati og 73)
Milan 2 (Taarabt 20, Honda 56) Att: 20,887

Juventus 2 (Llorente 32, 35)
Livorno 0 Att: 38,829

Saturday, April 12

Roma 3 (Taddei 13, Ljajic 44, Gervinho 63)
Atalanta 1 (Migliaccio 78) Att: 41,366

Sassuolo 1 (Zaza 36)
Cagliari 1 (Ibraimi pen 47) Att: 14,230

Sunday, April 13

Bologna 1 (Cherubin 44)
Parma 1 (Palladino 79) Att: 21,379

Livorno 2 (Siligardi 6, Paulinho pen 34)
Chievo 4 (Paloschi 9, 45+1, pen 56, Thereau 23) Att: 13,540

Milan 1 (Montolivo 23)
Catania 0 Att: 33,014

Napoli 4 (Mertens 42, Higuain pen 49, 67, 90+4)
Lazio 2 (Lulic 21, Onazi 82) Att: 39,987

Sampdoria 0
Internazionale 4 (Icardi 13, 63, Samuel 61, Palacio 79) Att: 23,964

Torino 2 (Immobile 90+2, Cerci 90+3)
Genoa 1 (Gilardino 85) Att: 23,457

Verona 3 (Sala 14, Toni pen 73, Iturbe 90+1)
Fiorentina 5 (Cuadrado 31, Aquilani 44, 86, Borja Valero 63, Matri pen 83) Att: 23,778

Monday, April 14

Udinese 0
Juventus 2 (Giovinco 16, Llorente 26) Att: 22,262

Saturday, April 19

Atalanta 1 (Denis 87)
Verona 2 (Donati 53, Toni 72) Att: 13,487

Catania 2 (Leto 45, Bergessio 63)
Sampdoria 1 (Okaka Chuka 61) Att: 18,555

Chievo 0
Sassuolo 1 (Berardi 40) Att: 10,000

Fiorentina 0
Roma 1 (Nainggolan 26) Att: 34,554

Genoa 1 (De Maio 3)
Cagliari 2 (Sau 37, Ibarbo 82) Att: 18,318

beating Dundalk 1-0 in the Setanta Sports Cup Final. A Paul O'Conor goal gave Ian Baraclough's side a first-ever success in the all-Ireland competition.

SAN MARINO

Third title triumph

La Fiorita were crowned league champions for the third time with a 2-0 victory over SS Folgore Falciano in the play-off Final.

Mirco Facondini and Enrico Golinucci scored as Libertas beat Faetano 2-0 in the Final of the country's domestic cup competition.

SPAIN

Barca youth champs

Barcelona won the inaugural UEFA Youth League, beating Benfica 3-0 in the Final. Rodrigo Tarin gave Barca a ninth-minute lead before Munir El Haddadi added two more to finish as the tournament's top scorer with 11 goals. Romario Balde missed a first-half penalty for the Portuguese side.

"It was reward for the hard work we have put in," said Barcelona captain Roger Riera. "We've written history."

Best in Europe...Barcelona are the first youth champions

Juventus 1 (Pogba 64)
Bologna 0 Att: 39,131

Lazio 3 (Mauri 42, Candreva pen 61, 90+4)
Torino 3 (Kurtic 52, Tachtsidis 67, Immobile 89)
Att: 29,142

Milan 3 (Balotelli 43, Taarabt 51, Pazzini 83)
Livorno 0 Att: 38,903

Parma 0
Internazionale 2 (Rolando 48, Guarin 89)
Att: 16,289

Udinese 1 (Bruno Fernandes 54)
Napoli 1 (Callejon 38) Att: 16,219

Friday, April 25
Roma 2 (Pjanic 43, Gervinho 65)
Milan 0 Att: 38,000

Saturday, April 26
Bologna 0
Fiorentina 3 (Cuadrado 23, 87, Ilicic 34)
Att: 23,875

Internazionale 0
Napoli 0 Att: 47,119

Sunday, April 27
Atalanta 1 (De Luca 82)
Genoa 1 (De Ceglie 27) Att: 12,074

Cagliari 1 (Pinilla pen 35)
Parma 0 Att: 4,798

Livorno 0
Lazio 2 (Mauri 15, Candreva pen 51) Att: 8,608

Sampdoria 2 (Eder 81, Soriano 90+3)
Chievo 1 (Thereau pen 66) Att: 20,157

Torino 2 (El Kaddouri 15, Immobile 56)
Udinese 0 Att: 15,292

Verona 4 (Toni 6, Frison og 28, Marquinho 45, Gomez 75)
Catania 0 Att: 19,856

Monday, April 28
Sassuolo 1 (Zaza 9)
Juventus 3 (Tevez 35, Marchisio 58, Llorente 76)
Att: 21,500

Sunday, May 4
Catania 4 (Izco 26, 34, Bergessio 55, Barrientos 79)
Roma 1 (Totti 37) Att: 19,028

Chievo 0
Torino 1 (Sardo og 54) Att: 8,000

Genoa 0
Bologna 0 Att: 18,601

Milan 1 (De Jong 65)
Internazionale 0 Att: 73,855

Parma 2 (Cassano 8, Schelotto 90)
Sampdoria 0 Att: 26,849

Udinese 5 (Di Natale 19, 45, Badu 21, Pereyra 33, Gabriel Silva 44)
Livorno 3 (Paulinho 13, 29, Mesbah 88) Att: 13,247

Monday, May 5
Juventus 1 (Padoin 72)
Atalanta 0 Att: 38,803

Lazio 3 (Keita 30, Lulic 60, Mauri 90+3)
Verona 3 (Marquinho 37, Iturbe 69, Romulo 83)
Att: 27,924

Tuesday, May 6
Fiorentina 3 (Rodriguez pen 57, Rossi 72, Cuadrado 75)
Sassuolo 4 (Berardi pen 23, 33, 42, Sansone 65)
Att: 30,470

Napoli 3 (Mertens pen 33, Pandev 43, Dzemaili 57)
Cagliari 0 Att: 42,013

Saturday, May 10
Internazionale 4 (Palacio 7, 37, Icardi 34, Hernanes 79)
Lazio 1 (Biava 2) Att: 64,718

Verona 2 (Toni pen 14, Hallfredsson 54)
Udinese 2 (Di Natale 56, Badu 90+1) Att: 22,115

Sunday, May 11
Atalanta 2 (Denis pen 68, Brienza 90+6)
Milan 1 (Bellini og 52) Att: 16,985

Bologna 1 (Morleo 79)
Catania 2 (Monzon 22, Bergessio 84) Att: 30,929

Cagliari 0
Chievo 1 (Dainelli 72) Att: 4,798

Livorno 0
Fiorentina 1 (Cuadrado 57) Att: 9,776

Roma 0
Juventus 1 (Osvaldo 90+4) Att: 54,097

Sampdoria 2 (Eder 30, Wszolek 88)
Napoli 5 (Zapata 19, Insigne 26, Callejon 32, Hamsik 47, Mustafi og 61) Att: 20,012

Sassuolo 4 (Floro Flores 16, 89, Biondini 66, Vrsaljko og 87)
Genoa 2 (Calaio 40, Gilardino 76) Att: 16,678

Torino 1 (Immobile 42)
Parma 1 (Biabiany 71) Att: 25,559

Saturday, May 17
Udinese 3 (Di Natale 26, 32, 88)
Sampdoria 3 (Okaka Chuka 10, Eder 53, Soriano 55) Att: 14,862

Sunday, May 18
Catania 2 (Lodi 65, Bergessio pen 90+1)
Atalanta 1 (Kone 80) Att: 12,380

Chievo 2 (Obinna 73, 90)
Internazionale 1 (Andreolli 41) Att: 15,000

Fiorentina 2 (Rossi pen 57, Rebic 79)
Torino 2 (Larrondo 67, Kurtic 84) Att: 40,912

Genoa 1 (Fetfatzidis 83)
Roma 0 Att: 19,223

Juventus 3 (Silvestri og 8, Llorente 15, Marchisio 40)
Cagliari 0 Att: 39,334

Lazio 1 (Biglia pen 90+4)
Bologna 0 Att: 26,752

Milan 2 (Muntari 2, De Jong 27)
Sassuolo 1 (Zaza pen 90) Att: 38,119

Napoli 5 (Callejon 5, Zapata 13, 25, Mertens 62, 77)
Verona 1 (Iturbe 66) Att: 10,000

Parma 2 (Amauri 62, 80)
Livorno 0 Att: 16,763

ITALY – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Juventus (C)	38	33	3	2	80	23	102
Roma	38	26	7	5	72	25	85
Napoli	38	23	9	6	77	39	78
Fiorentina	38	19	8	11	65	44	65
Inter	38	15	15	8	62	39	60
Parma	38	15	13	10	58	46	58
Torino	38	15	12	11	58	48	57
Milan	38	16	9	13	57	49	57
Lazio	38	15	11	12	54	54	56
Verona	38	16	6	16	62	68	54
Atalanta	38	15	5	18	43	51	50
Sampdoria	38	12	9	17	48	62	45
Udinese	38	12	8	18	46	57	44
Genoa	38	11	11	16	41	50	44
Cagliari	38	9	12	17	34	53	39
Chievo	38	10	6	22	34	54	36
Sassuolo	38	9	7	22	43	72	34
Catania (R)	38	8	8	22	34	66	32
Bologna (R)	38	5	14	19	28	58	29
Livorno (R)	38	6	7	25	39	77	25

Top goalscorers

22 Ciro Immobile (Torino)
20 Luca Toni (Verona)
19 Carlos Tevez (Juventus)
17 Antonio Di Natale (Udinese)
17 Gonzalo Higuain (Napoli)
17 Rodrigo Palacio (Internazionale)

ITALIAN CUP

Final

May 3 - Rome (Olimpico)
Fiorentina 1 (Vargas 28)
Napoli 3 (Insigne 11, 17, Mertens 90+2)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 66,500. **Ref:** Orsato
Sent off: Inler (Napoli) 79min

MALTA

Division split after 22-round regular season; teams carried forward half the points (rounded up) gained in the regular season and all the rest of their regular-season record

MALTA – CHAMPIONSHIP GROUP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Valletta (C)	32	24	5	3	74	21	51
Birkirkara	32	25	3	4	76	25	50
Hibernians	32	18	4	10	77	51	35
Mosta	32	15	6	11	58	57	32
Sliema	32	14	10	8	54	42	31
Balzan	32	9	5	18	36	58	18

MALTA – RELEGATION GROUP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Floriana[1]	32	14	5	13	50	48	30
Tarxien	32	10	6	16	51	55	28
Qormi	32	10	4	18	51	62	26
Naxxar	32	11	6	15	40	55	26
Vittoriosa (R)	32	9	6	17	41	66	24
Rabat (R)	32	1	4	27	23	91	4

[1]6pts deducted (from regular season tally) because of debt-related issue

MOLDOVA

MOLDOVA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sheriff (C)	33	28	3	2	98	16	87
Tiraspol	33	21	9	3	60	27	72
Veris	33	21	8	4	74	25	71
Zimbru	33	18	7	8	56	24	61
Dacia	33	18	7	8	68	29	61
Milsami	33	17	5	11	54	32	56
Costuleni	33	16	4	13	43	33	52
Dinamo-Auto	33	9	4	20	37	72	31
Rapid[1] (R)[2]	33	6	4	23	27	75	20
Academia	33	5	4	24	26	88	19
Olimpia	33	5	3	25	26	77	18
Speranta[3] (R)	33	4	2	27	20	91	11

[1]2pts deducted for failing to pay 2 players
[2]Rapid are relegated after withdrawing from league in March (all subsequent fixtures were awarded as 3-0 wins to their scheduled opponents)
[3]3pts deducted for not paying a player

NORTHERN IRELAND

Division split after 33-round regular season; teams carried forward full regular-season record

N IRELAND – CHAMPIONSHIP GROUP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cliftonville (C)	38	26	7	5	88	39	85
Linfield	38	24	7	7	81	46	79
Crusaders	38	18	12	8	67	42	66
Portadown	38	18	8	12	77	53	62
Glentoran	38	16	11	11	54	42	59
Glenavon	38	15	6	17	75	79	51

N IRELAND – RELEGATION GROUP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ballymena	38	13	8	17	48	59	47
Dungannon	38	12	8	18	49	66	44
Coleraine	38	10	12	16	51	61	42
Ballinamallard	38	10	9	19	35	70	39
Warrenpoint	38	10	6	22	43	72	36
Ards (R)	38	6	6	26	44	83	24

NORWAY

Apr 4: Viking 0 Stromsgodset 0.
Apr 5: Odd 2 Molde 1; Aalesund 1 Rosenborg 1.
Apr 6: Start 3 Haugesund 1; Sogndal 1 Sarpsborg 1; Valerenga 3 Bodo/Glimt 1; Lillestrom 4 Sandnes Ulf 1; Brann 1 Stabaek 2.
Apr 11: Sandnes Ulf 1 Brann 1.
Apr 12: Lillestrom 0 Viking 1; Haugesund 1 Valerenga 1.
Apr 13: Stabaek 0 Molde 2; Bodo/Glimt 4 Sogndal 2; Stromsgodset 2 Aalesund 0; Sarpsborg 1 Start 1; Rosenborg 2 Odd 0.
Apr 21: Viking 2 Haugesund 0; Aalesund 1 Start 2; Valerenga 3 Sandnes Ulf 0; Brann 2 Lillestrom 0; Molde 5 Sarpsborg 1; Odd 2 Stabaek 1; Sogndal 1 Stromsgodset 3; Bodo/Glimt 2 Rosenborg 2.
Apr 27: Stromsgodset 2 Odd 1; Rosenborg 5 Brann 2; Stabaek 2 Bodo/Glimt 1; Haugesund 0 Sogndal 3; Sandnes Ulf 1 Molde 3; Start 0 Viking 2.
Apr 28: Lillestrom 0 Aalesund 0; Sarpsborg 3 Valerenga 0.
Apr 30: Brann 1 Haugesund 3; Sandnes Ulf 2 Stabaek 1.
May 1: Aalesund 1 Viking 2; Bodo/Glimt 1 Lillestrom 2; Molde 2 Start 0; Odd 2 Sarpsborg 0; Valerenga 3 Stromsgodset 0; Sogndal 1 Rosenborg 2.
May 4: Haugesund 1 Aalesund 2; Sarpsborg 2 Sandnes Ulf 1; Stromsgodset 2 Bodo/Glimt 0; Rosenborg 0 Molde 2; Lillestrom 2 Sogndal 0; Start 1 Brann 1.
May 5: Viking 1 Odd 1; Stabaek 0 Valerenga 3.

CHILE

Record extended

Colo Colo ended a four-year wait to win the Chilean championship again – the second-longest barren spell in the club's history, after their 1972-79 stretch – clinching this year's clausura title to extend their domestic record to 30 league titles.

Colo Colo striker Esteban Paredes ended the season by scoring all five goals, in 47 minutes, in his side's 5-3 win at Nublense to top the league goalscoring chart with 16 for the season.

Deportes Iquique beat Huachipato 3-1 in the Final of the Chilean Cup. However, they then lost on penalties to apertura champions O'Higgins in the Super Cup.

Spot on...Atletico Nacional celebrate their penalty shoot-out win

COLOMBIA

Three on the trot

Atletico Nacional won their third successive national title, beating Junior on penalties to claim the Primera apertura. A goal from Atletico substitute Jhon Valoy three minutes into injury time in the second leg levelled the aggregate score at 2-2 in the play-off Final.

May 10: Bodo/Glimt 2 Haugesund 1; Aalesund 0 Brann 1.
May 11: Odd 0 Lillestrom 2; Valerenga 1 Viking 1; Sogndal 2 Start 1; Stabaek 3 Sarpsborg 2; Molde 2 Stromsgodset 2.
May 12: Sandnes Ulf 0 Rosenborg 2.
May 16: Brann 1 Bodo/Glimt 2; Haugesund 1 Odd 2; Aalesund 2 Sogndal 2; Lillestrom 1 Molde 2; Viking 2 Sandnes Ulf 2; Start 2 Valerenga 2; Rosenborg 1 Stabaek 3; Stromsgodset 4 Sarpsborg 1.
May 19: Valerenga 2 Lillestrom 2; Sarpsborg 1 Rosenborg 1.
May 20: Bodo/Glimt 2 Start 1; Sandnes Ulf 0 Haugesund 0; Odd 2 Aalesund 1; Molde 1 Viking 0; Sogndal 2 Brann 1; Stabaek 2 Stromsgodset 1.
May 23: Haugesund 1 Molde 1.
May 24: Lillestrom 5 Stabaek 1; Stromsgodset 1 Rosenborg 1.
May 25: Aalesund 0 Sarpsborg 0; Viking 2 Bodo/Glimt 3; Start 0 Odd 1; Sogndal 1 Sandnes Ulf 0; Brann 2 Valerenga 3.

NORWAY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Molde	11	8	2	1	23	8	26
Stromsgodset	11	6	3	2	21	13	21
Odd	11	6	2	3	14	12	20
Valerenga	11	5	4	2	21	14	19
Lillestrom	11	5	3	3	19	11	18
Stabaek	11	6	0	5	18	20	18
Rosenborg	11	4	5	2	19	15	17
Viking	11	4	5	2	15	11	17
Bodo/Glimt	11	5	2	4	19	19	17
Sogndal	11	4	2	5	15	19	14
Sarpsborg	11	3	4	4	15	18	13
Start	11	2	3	6	13	19	9
Aalesund	11	1	5	5	9	14	8
Brann	11	2	2	7	13	22	8
Haugesund	11	1	4	6	10	18	7
Sandnes Ulf	11	1	4	6	9	20	7

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated, 3rd bottom will enter rel/prom play-off

POLAND

Regular season

Apr 4: Podbeskidzie 3 Slask 3; Cracovia 2 Gornik 0.
Apr 5: Lechia 2 Zaglebie 1; Widzew 2 Wisla 1; Lech 6 Jagiellonia 1.
Apr 6: Piast 2 Pogon 2; Legia 3 Zawisza 0.
Apr 7: Ruch 2 Korona 0.
Apr 12: Zawisza 0 Ruch 3; Korona 1 Cracovia 0; Slask 1 Lechia 0; Zaglebie 1 Legia 3; Pogon 1 Widzew 0; Jagiellonia 1 Piast 1; Wisla 0 Podbeskidzie 1; Gornik 0 Lech 3.

POLAND – REGULAR – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Legia	30	20	3	7	60	30	63
Lech	30	15	8	7	56	34	53
Ruch	30	14	8	8	40	38	50
Pogon	30	11	14	5	47	38	47
Wisla	30	12	9	9	38	30	45
Zawisza	30	11	9	10	43	37	42
Gornik	30	11	9	10	42	46	42
Lechia	30	10	10	10	38	37	40
Cracovia	30	11	6	13	37	43	39
Jagiellonia	30	10	9	11	46	43	39
Korona	30	9	10	11	36	41	37
Slask	30	7	13	10	38	40	34
Piast	30	8	10	12	29	47	34
Podbeskidzie	30	6	13	11	27	39	31
Zaglebie	30	7	8	15	31	40	29
Widzew	30	5	7	18	26	51	22

Top 8 formed championship group, bottom 8 formed relegation group; teams carried forward half the points (rounded up) gained in the regular season and all the rest of their regular-season record

Championship group

Apr 25: Lech 3 Wisla 0.
Apr 26: Legia 2 Zawisza 0.
Apr 27: Ruch 0 Lechia 0.
Apr 28: Pogon 2 Gornik 2.
May 3: Lechia 0 Legia 1; Wisla 5 Pogon 0.
May 4: Gornik 2 Ruch 0.
May 5: Zawisza 1 Lech 2.
May 9: Legia 5 Wisla 0.
May 10: Pogon 0 Lechia 2; Lech 2 Gornik 1.
May 11: Ruch 3 Zawisza 1.
May 16: Lechia 2 Lech 1.
May 17: Pogon 1 Zawisza 2.
May 18: Gornik 2 Legia 3.
May 19: Ruch 2 Wisla 2.
May 24: Wisla 2 Gornik 3; Lech 0 Pogon 0.
May 25: Legia 1 Ruch 2; Zawisza 0 Lechia 0.
May 28: Pogon 0 Legia 1; Lech 4 Ruch 0; Zawisza 0 Gornik 1; Lechia 2 Wisla 2.
June 1: Legia 2 Lech 0; Ruch 0 Pogon 0; Wisla 2 Zawisza 1; Gornik 0 Lechia 2.

POLAND – CHAMPIONSHIP GROUP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Legia (C)	37	26	3	8	75	34	50
Lech	37	19	9	9	68	40	40
Ruch	37	16	11	10	47	48	34
Lechia	37	13	13	11	46	41	32
Wisla	37	14	11	12	51	46	31
Gornik	37	14	10	13	53	57	31
Pogon	37	11	17	9	50	50	27
Zawisza	37	12	10	15	48	48	25

Relegation group

Apr 25: Cracovia 0 Podbeskidzie 1.
Apr 26: Slask 1 Zaglebie 0; Jagiellonia 4 Piast 3.
Apr 27: Korona 2 Widzew 2.
May 1: Podbeskidzie 2 Jagiellonia 1.
May 3: Piast 0 Slask 0.
May 4: Widzew 2 Cracovia 0.
May 5: Zaglebie 0 Korona 0.
May 9: Jagiellonia 1 Zaglebie 0.
May 10: Cracovia 1 Piast 5.
May 11: Korona 3 Podbeskidzie 2.
May 12: Slask 1 Widzew 0.
May 16: Widzew 1 Jagiellonia 1.
May 17: Slask 0 Podbeskidzie 0; Korona 0 Piast 1.
May 18: Zaglebie 1 Cracovia 2.
May 22: Jagiellonia 0 Slask 3; Podbeskidzie 3 Widzew 0.
May 23: Cracovia 1 Korona 1; Piast 2 Zaglebie 0.
May 27: Slask 1 Cracovia 0; Jagiellonia 4 Korona 4; Podbeskidzie 2 Zaglebie 0.
May 28: Widzew 2 Piast 1.
May 31: Cracovia 2 Jagiellonia 2; Korona 1 Slask 5; Piast 2 Podbeskidzie 2; *Zaglebie v Widzew (game suspended).*

POLAND – RELEGATION GROUP – FINAL[1]

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Slask	37	12	15	10	49	41	34
Podbeskidzie	37	10	15	12	39	45	30
Jagiellonia	37	12	12	13	59	58	29
Piast	37	11	12	14	43	56	28
Korona	37	10	14	13	47	56	26
Cracovia	37	12	8	17	43	56	25
Widzew (R)	36	7	9	20	33	59	19
Zaglebie (R)	36	7	9	20	32	48	16

[1]*Pending decision on result of Zaglebie v Widzew game*

POLISH CUP

Final

May 2 - Warsaw (Narodowy)
Zaglebie 0
Zawisza 0
Aet. **Att:** 37,120. **Ref:** Przybyl
Zawisza 6-5 on pens

PORTUGAL

Apr 4: Guimaraes 1 Estoril 3.
Apr 5: Olhanense 0 Braga 2; Pacos de Ferreira 1 Sporting 3.
Apr 6: Gil Vicente 0 Belenenses 1; Maritimo 1 Arouca 0; Setubal 3 Nacional 0; Porto 3 Academica 1.
Apr 7: Benfica 4 Rio Ave 0.
Apr 11: Academica 1 Setubal 1.
Apr 12: Nacional 2 Maritimo 0; Belenenses 3 Guimaraes 1; Rio Ave 1 Olhanense 2; Sporting 2 Gil Vicente 0.
Apr 13: Arouca 0 Benfica 2; Braga 1 Porto 3.
Apr 14: Estoril 1 Pacos de Ferreira 0.
Apr 17: Guimaraes 2 Arouca 3.
Apr 19: Maritimo 3 Academica 1; Pacos de Ferreira 0 Nacional 5; Gil Vicente 0 Estoril 0; Belenenses 0 Sporting 1.
Apr 20: Benfica 2 Olhanense 0.
Apr 21: Setubal 1 Braga 1; Porto 3 Rio Ave 0.
May 3: Nacional 1 Sporting 1.
May 4: Benfica 1 Setubal 1; Rio Ave 0 Pacos de Ferreira 0; Olhanense 2 Porto 1; Arouca 1 Gil Vicente 0; Academica 0 Guimaraes 0; Estoril 1 Belenenses 1; Braga 1 Maritimo 1.
May 10: Belenenses 1 Arouca 0; Pacos de Ferreira 2 Academica 4; Porto 2 Benfica 1; Setubal 3 Olhanense 1; Guimaraes 1 Braga 0.
May 11: Sporting 0 Estoril 1; Gil Vicente 1 Nacional 0; Maritimo 1 Rio Ave 0.

PORTUGAL – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Benfica (C)	30	23	5	2	58	18	74
Sporting	30	20	7	3	54	20	67
Porto	30	19	4	7	57	25	61
Estoril	30	15	9	6	42	26	54
Nacional	30	11	12	7	43	33	45
Maritimo	30	11	8	11	40	44	41
Setubal	30	10	9	11	41	41	39
Academica	30	9	10	11	25	35	37
Braga	30	10	7	13	39	37	37
Guimaraes	30	10	5	15	30	35	35
Rio Ave	30	8	8	14	21	35	32
Arouca	30	8	7	15	28	42	31
Gil Vicente	30	8	7	15	23	37	31
Belenenses	30	6	10	14	19	33	28
P Ferreira[1]	30	6	6	18	28	59	24
Olhanense (R)	30	6	6	18	21	49	24

[1]*Pacos de Ferreira stay in top division after winning rel/prom play-off*

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Apr 4: St Patrick's 1 Dundalk 4; UCD 1 Limerick 1; Drogheda 3 Athlone 2; Derry 1 Sligo 0; Cork 3 Shamrock 0; Bohemians 1 Bray 1.
Apr 7: Athlone 1 Bohemians 3; Dundalk 3 Derry 0; Sligo 1 Drogheda 1; Shamrock 2 UCD 0; Bray 1 St Patrick's 3.
Apr 11: Bohemians 0 Limerick 1; Cork 1 Sligo 1; Derry 3 Athlone 2; Drogheda 0 Bray 2; St Patrick's 1 Shamrock 0; UCD 1 Dundalk 4.
Apr 18: Bray 0 Derry 0; Cork 3 Drogheda 1; Dundalk 2 Shamrock 2; Limerick 2 Athlone 1; St Patrick's 3 Bohemians 1; Sligo 5 UCD 0.
Apr 21: Athlone 0 Dundalk 1; Bohemians 0 Sligo 2; Derry 0 Limerick 0; Drogheda 0 St Patrick's 4; UCD 0 Cork 1; Shamrock 2 Bray 1.
Apr 25: Bray 1 Dundalk 0; Cork 1 Bohemians 1; Derry 1 UCD 1; Drogheda 2 Shamrock 3; Limerick 0 Sligo 3; St Patrick's 4 Athlone 0.
May 2: Athlone 0 Bray 0; Bohemians 1 Derry 1; Dundalk 4 Cork 0; UCD 2 Drogheda 1; Shamrock 1 Limerick 1.
May 3: Sligo 2 St Patrick's 2.
May 9: Bohemians 0 UCD 0; Bray 1 Limerick 0; Derry 0 Shamrock 1; St Patrick's 3 Cork 2.
May 16: Cork 2 Derry 0; Drogheda 1 Bohemians 0; Limerick 1 Dundalk 2; UCD 1 St Patrick's 1.
May 17: Shamrock 1 Athlone 0; Sligo 3 Bray 0.
May 20: Dundalk 7 Drogheda 0; Athlone 0 Sligo 2; Limerick 1 Cork 2.
May 23: Athlone 2 UCD 0; Bray 0 Cork 2; Derry 2 Drogheda 0; Dundalk 3 Sligo 0; Limerick 2 St Patrick's 0; Shamrock 0 Bohemians 0.
May 30: Bohemians 0 Dundalk 2; Cork 1 Athlone 0; Drogheda 1 Limerick 4; St Patrick's 5 Derry 2; UCD 0 Bray 0.
June 1: Sligo 0 Shamrock 1.
June 2: Dundalk 5 UCD 2; St Patrick's 6 Drogheda 0.

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dundalk	16	12	2	2	42	14	38
Cork	15	10	3	2	26	13	33
St Patrick's	16	9	5	2	38	19	32
Shamrock	15	9	4	2	22	13	31
Sligo	15	6	3	6	21	13	21
Limerick	15	4	5	6	15	16	17
Bray	15	4	5	6	12	19	17
Derry	15	3	7	5	12	18	16
Drogheda	16	4	3	9	18	40	15
UCD	16	3	5	8	17	33	14
Bohemians	15	2	7	6	14	19	13
Athlone	15	1	1	13	11	31	4

33-round season (11x3); bottom team will be relegated, 2nd bottom will enter rel/prom play-off

ROMANIA

Apr 4: Concordia 2 Ceahlaul 0; Vaslui 0 Viitorul 1.
Apr 5: Botosani 3 Corona 1; Poli 0 Steaua 0.
Apr 6: Brasov 2 Astra 1; CFR 1 Petrolul 1.
Apr 7: Gaz Metan 0 Pandurii 1; Sageata 1 Universitatea 0; Dinamo 3 Otelul 1.
Apr 11: Corona 0 Poli 0; Steaua 0 Vaslui 1.
Apr 12: Astra 1 Concordia 0; Petrolul 2 Gaz Metan 0.
Apr 13: Otelul 0 CFR 1; Ceahlaul 0 Dinamo 1.
Apr 14: Universitatea 2 Botosani 1; Viitorul 0 Brasov 0; Pandurii 0 Sageata 0.
Apr 18: Gaz Metan 0 Otelul 2.
Apr 19: Vaslui 8 Corona 1; CFR 2 Ceahlaul 0.
Apr 20: Dinamo 2 Astra 0; Botosani 3 Pandurii 2; Sageata 2 Petrolul 3.
Apr 21: Poli 1 Universitatea 2; Brasov 3 Concordia 1; Viitorul 0 Steaua 3.
Apr 25: Ceahlaul 0 Gaz Metan 1.
Apr 26: Otelul 0 Sageata 1; Universitatea 1 Vaslui 0.
Apr 27: Astra 1 CFR 0; Pandurii 0 Poli 1; Concordia 1 Dinamo 3.
Apr 28: Corona 0 Viitorul 4; Steaua 3 Brasov 0; Petrolul 3 Botosani 0.
May 2: Sageata 0 Ceahlaul 2; Gaz Metan 0 Astra 0; CFR 1 Concordia 1.
May 3: Vaslui 1 Pandurii 0; Poli 0 Petrolul 3; Brasov 2 Dinamo 0.
May 4: Botosani 3 Otelul 1; Viitorul 1 Universitatea 0.
May 5: Steaua 3 Corona 0.
May 6: Concordia 1 Gaz Metan 0; Dinamo 0 CFR 3.
May 7: Ceahlaul 0 Botosani 0; Petrolul 3 Vaslui 0; Astra 2 Sageata 0.
May 8: Brasov 1 Corona 0; Pandurii 1 Viitorul 1; Otelul 1 Poli 0; Universitatea 0 Steaua 1.
May 10: Sageata 4 Concordia 0; Gaz Metan 1 Dinamo 1.
May 11: Vaslui 1 Otelul 4; Poli 1 Ceahlaul 1; Botosani 0 Astra 2; Viitorul 2 Petrolul 0.
May 12: Corona 0 Universitatea 2; CFR 1 Brasov 0; Steaua 2 Pandurii 2.

PERU

Coach's first title

Alianza Lima won the Inca Cup, beating San Martin 5-3 on penalties following a 3-3 draw after extra time. The title is the first for Uruguayan coach Guillermo Sanguinetti, who joined Alianza in November 2013.

"My players have shown me that they have ice in their veins," said Sanguinetti.

URUGUAY

Long wait over

A seven-game winning run saw Wanderers claim the clausura title with a 1-0 victory over El Tanque Sisley. Wanderers have not been Uruguayan champions since 1931, when the top flight was an amateur competition.

They will face apertura winners Danubio.

Hero...Falcon's injury-time strike secured the title for Zamora

VENEZUELA

Last-gasp winner

Zamora clinched the clausura title with a 3-2 victory over Zulia on the final day of the league season thanks to an injury-time winner from Juan Falcon.

Zamora then retained their national title, beating apertura winners Mineros 4-3 on aggregate.

May 15: Pandurii 5 Corona 0; CFR 3 Gaz Metan 1.
May 16: Brasov 0 Universitatea 0; Dinamo 4 Sageata 1; Otelul 4 Viitorul 1; Astra 5 Poli 1.
May 17: Ceahlaul 2 Vaslui 0; Concordia 1 Botosani 1; Petrolul 0 Steaua 0.
May 19: Vaslui 1 Astra 4.
May 20: Universitatea 0 Pandurii 3; Steaua 2 Otelul 2; Corona 0 Petrolul 3.
May 21: Gaz Metan 1 Brasov 1; Botosani 1 Dinamo 2; Sageata 2 CFR 1; Poli 1 Concordia 0; Viitorul 1 Ceahlaul 0.

ROMANIA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Steaua (C)	34	22	11	1	71	20	77
Astra	34	22	6	6	70	28	72
Petrolul	34	18	14	2	53	20	68
Dinamo	34	17	8	9	52	34	59
CFR	34	13	12	9	44	33	51
Vaslui (R)[1]	34	15	6	13	38	32	51
Pandurii	34	14	8	12	59	39	50
Botosani	34	12	7	15	36	52	43
Ceahlaul	34	10	11	13	27	31	41
Otelul	34	12	5	17	43	52	41
Universitatea	34	11	7	16	29	46	40
Viitorul	34	10	10	14	29	50	40
Gaz Metan	34	10	9	15	32	38	39
Concordia	34	10	9	15	34	47	39
Brasov	34	9	11	14	32	40	38
Poli (R)	34	10	8	16	26	42	38
Sageata (R)	34	10	8	16	32	54	38
Corona (R)	34	2	8	24	20	69	14

[1]Vaslui relegated after being refused a top-division licence for next season for financial reasons

RUSSIA

Apr 4: Kuban 2 Tom 0; Spartak 0 Ural 1.
Apr 5: Amkar 0 Terek 1; Krylia Sovetov 1 CSKA 3.
Apr 6: Zenit 6 Rubin 2; Anzhi 4 Dynamo 0; Krasnodar 0 Rostov 2.
Apr 7: Lokomotiv 3 Volga 0.
Apr 8: Krylia Sovetov 1 Terek 1.
Apr 11: Spartak 1 Krylia Sovetov 0.
Apr 12: Tom 0 Amkar 0; CSKA 1 Ural 0; Terek 3 Rostov 0; Zenit 4 Krasnodar 1.
Apr 13: Lokomotiv 0 Anzhi 0; Rubin 0 Kuban 2.
Apr 14: Volga 0 Dynamo 5.
Apr 18: Amkar 0 Ural 2.
Apr 19: Tom 2 Krylia Sovetov 0; Lokomotiv 2 Terek 1; Anzhi 1 Zenit 2.
Apr 20: Rubin 2 Spartak 1; Dynamo 1 Krasnodar 2; Kuban 0 CSKA 4.
Apr 21: Volga 2 Rostov 1.
Apr 25: Krylia Sovetov 2 Amkar 2.
Apr 26: Ural 0 Tom 0; Zenit 2 Volga 0; Krasnodar 1 Lokomotiv 3.
Apr 27: CSKA 2 Rubin 1; Rostov 1 Anzhi 1; Terek 1 Dynamo 0.
Apr 28: Spartak 0 Kuban 2.
May 2: Amkar 1 CSKA 3; Volga 0 Krasnodar 1; Rostov 2 Dynamo 3.
May 3: Tom 2 Spartak 1; Kuban 4 Krylia Sovetov 0.
May 4: Lokomotiv 1 Zenit 1; Rubin 1 Ural 0; Anzhi 3 Terek 0.
May 10: Ural 2 Kuban 1; Krylia Sovetov 0 Rubin 4; Spartak 1 Amkar 0; Terek 2 Volga 0.
May 11: CSKA 2 Tom 0; Zenit 0 Dynamo 3 (awarded); Krasnodar 1 Anzhi 0; Rostov 2 Lokomotiv 0.
May 15: Amkar 2 Krasnodar 2; Anzhi 0 Krylia Sovetov 1; Spartak 3 Dynamo 2; Kuban 1 Zenit 4; Rubin 1 Terek 1; CSKA 1 Lokomotiv 0; Tom 3 Rostov 2; Volga 1 Ural 2.

RUSSIA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
CSKA (C)	30	20	4	6	49	26	64
Zenit	30	19	6	5	63	32	63
Lokomotiv	30	17	8	5	51	23	59
Dynamo	30	15	7	8	54	37	52
Krasnodar	30	15	5	10	46	39	50
Spartak	30	15	5	10	46	36	50
Rostov	30	10	9	11	40	40	39
Kuban	30	10	8	12	40	42	38
Rubin	30	9	11	10	36	30	38
Amkar	30	9	11	10	36	37	38
Ural	30	9	7	14	28	46	34
Terek	30	8	9	13	27	33	33
Tom (R)[1]	30	8	7	15	23	39	31
K Sovetov (R)[1]	30	6	11	13	27	46	29
Volga (R)	30	6	3	21	22	65	21
Anzhi (R)	30	3	11	16	25	42	20

[1]Tom & Krylia Sovetov both relegated after losing their respective rel/prom play-off

SCOTLAND

Regular season

Apr 1: Inverness 1 Motherwell 2.
Apr 2: Hearts 1 Aberdeen 1.
Apr 4: Ross County 1 Inverness 2.
Apr 5: Dundee United 0 Celtic 2; Partick 2 Hearts 4; Kilmarnock 1 St Johnstone 2; St Mirren 3 Motherwell 2.
Apr 7: Hibernian 0 Aberdeen 2.

SCOTLAND – REGULAR – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Celtic	33	28	4	1	82	16	88
Aberdeen	33	19	6	8	47	30	63
Motherwell	33	19	3	11	55	50	60
Dundee Utd	33	15	9	9	57	40	54
Inverness	33	15	7	11	40	35	52
St Johnstone	33	14	6	13	41	34	48
Hibernian	33	8	10	15	29	44	34
Kilmarnock	33	9	6	18	41	57	33
Ross County	33	8	7	18	38	56	31
St Mirren	33	8	7	18	34	55	31
Partick	33	6	12	15	36	57	30
Hearts[1]	33	7	7	19	33	59	13

Top 6 formed championship group, bottom 6 formed relegation group; teams carried forward full regular-season record

[1]15pts deducted for going into administration

Championship group

Apr 18: Inverness 0 Aberdeen 0.
Apr 19: Motherwell 3 Celtic 3; St Johnstone 2 Dundee United 0.
Apr 26: Aberdeen 1 St Johnstone 1; Dundee United 5 Motherwell 1.
Apr 27: Celtic 6 Inverness 0.
May 3: Celtic 5 Aberdeen 2; Inverness 1 Dundee United 1; Motherwell 2 St Johnstone 1.
May 6: Dundee United 1 Aberdeen 3.
May 7: Motherwell 2 Inverness 1; St Johnstone 3 Celtic 3.
May 11: Aberdeen 0 Motherwell 1; Celtic 3 Dundee United 1; Inverness 2 St Johnstone 0.

SCOTLAND – CHAMPIONSHIP GROUP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Celtic (C)	38	31	6	1	102	25	99
Motherwell	38	22	4	12	64	60	70
Aberdeen	38	20	8	10	53	38	68
Dundee Utd	38	16	10	12	65	50	58
Inverness	38	16	9	13	44	44	57
St Johnstone	38	15	8	15	48	42	53

Relegation group

Apr 19: Hearts 2 Ross County 0; Kilmarnock 1 Partick 2; St Mirren 2 Hibernian 0.
Apr 25: Partick 1 St Mirren 1.
Apr 26: Ross County 2 Kilmarnock 1.
Apr 27: Hibernian 1 Hearts 2.
May 3: Hibernian 1 Partick 1; St Mirren 1 Ross County 0.
May 4: Hearts 5 Kilmarnock 0.
May 6: Ross County 1 Hibernian 0.
May 7: Hearts 2 Partick 4; Kilmarnock 1 St Mirren 0.
May 10: Hibernian 0 Kilmarnock 1; Partick 2 Ross County 3; St Mirren 1 Hearts 1.

SCOTLAND – RELEGATION GROUP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ross County	38	11	7	20	44	62	40
St Mirren	38	10	9	19	39	58	39
Kilmarnock	38	11	6	21	45	66	39
Partick	38	8	14	16	46	65	38
Hibernian (R)[1]	38	8	11	19	31	51	35
Hearts[2] (R)	38	10	8	20	45	65	23

[1]Hibernian relegated after losing rel/prom play-off
[2]15pts deducted for going into administration

SCOTTISH CUP

Final

May 17 - Glasgow (Celtic Park)
St Johnstone 2 (Anderson 45+1, MacLean 84)
Dundee United 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 47,345. **Ref:** Thomson

SERBIA

SERBIA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Red Star (C)	30	23	3	4	66	27	72
Partizan	30	22	5	3	64	20	71
Jagodina	30	13	9	8	40	30	48
Vojvodina	30	11	12	7	38	32	45
Cukaricki	30	12	8	10	30	31	44
Radnicki Nis	30	10	13	7	28	22	43
Vozdovac	30	12	6	12	34	35	42
Novi Pazar	30	11	6	13	32	34	39
Napredak	30	9	8	13	42	44	35
Spartak	30	8	10	12	24	37	34
OFK	30	10	3	17	31	43	33
Donji Srem	30	7	11	12	29	40	32
Radnicki 1923	30	7	11	12	30	49	32
Rad[1]	30	8	5	17	19	37	29
Javor (R)	30	6	11	13	29	38	29
Sloboda (R)	30	7	7	16	21	38	28

[1]Rad enter rel/prom play-off

SPAIN

Friday, April 4

Almeria 1 (Soriano 73)
Osasuna 2 (Oriol Riera 19, Arribas 33) Att: 13,000

Saturday, April 5

Atletico Madrid 1 (Raul Garcia 14)
Villarreal 0 Att: 50,000

Barcelona 3 (Messi pen 15, 86, Jordi og 67)
Betis 1 (Ruben Castro 68) Att: 81,978

Rayo Vallecano 3 (Rochina 26, Bueno 49, 60)
Celta Vigo 0 Att: 11,849

Real Sociedad 0
Real Madrid 4 (Illarramendi 45, Bale 66, Pepe 85, Morata 88) Att: 30,016

Sunday, April 6

Elche 1 (Boakye 90+3)
Getafe 0 Att: 31,101

Malaga 4 (Camacho 14, 37, Amrabat pen 50, Juanmi 74)
Granada 1 (El Arabi 78) Att: 28,963

Sevilla 4 (Mbia 18, Gameiro 44, 84, Rakitic 89)
Espanyol 1 (Sergio Garcia pen 47) Att: 33,600

Valladolid 0
Valencia 0 Att: 18,600

Monday, April 7

Levante 1 (San Jose og 66)
Athletic Bilbao 2 (Aduriz 15, 45) Att: 10,664

Friday, April 11

Osasuna 0
Valladolid 0 Att: 17,914

Saturday, April 12

Celta Vigo 2 (Nolito pen 37, Santi Mina 82)
Real Sociedad 2 (Canales 8, Griezmann 43)
Att: 20,839

Granada 1 (Brahimi 16)
Barcelona 0 Att: 18,200

Real Madrid 4 (Di Maria 28, Bale 53, Isco 56, Morata 85)
Almeria 0 Att: 65,896

Villarreal 1 (Perbet 90+5)
Levante 0 Att: 15,535

Sunday, April 13

Betis 0
Sevilla 2 (Gameiro pen 30, 82) Att: 32,254

Espanyol 2 (Stuani 3, Colotto 88)
Rayo Vallecano 2 (Falque 43, Larrivey 50)
Att: 16,110

Getafe 0
Atletico Madrid 2 (Godin 40, Diego Costa 84)
Att: 12,100

Valencia 2 (Piatti 22, Parejo 61)
Elche 1 (Coro 28) Att: 42,000

Monday, April 14

Athletic Bilbao 3 (Aduriz 4, 46, Ander Herrera 62)
Malaga 0 Att: 34,000

Friday, April 18

Atletico Madrid 2 (Miranda 72, Diego Costa pen 90+1)
Elche 0 Att: 48,782

Saturday, April 19

Levante 0
Getafe 0 Att: 10,193

Osasuna 1 (Oriol Riera 19)
Valencia 1 (Jonas 82) Att: 16,975

Real Sociedad 2 (Canales 32, Vela 90+1)
Espanyol 1 (Cordoba 23) Att: 20,342

Sunday, April 20

Almeria 2 (Rodri 40, Oscar Diaz 88)
Celta Vigo 4 (Nolito 19, 71, Charles 52, Orellana 75) Att: 12,000

Barcelona 2 (Pedro 71, Messi 74)
Athletic Bilbao 1 (Aduriz 50) Att: 57,090

Rayo Vallecano 3 (Rochina 14, Paulao og 27, Larrivey 51)
Betis 1 (Chica 79) Att: 11,954

Sevilla 4 (Mainz og 14, Gameiro 51, Mbia 58, Vitolo 68)
Granada 0 Att: 30,000

COSTA RICA

Continental record

Saprissa set a new continental record with their 30th domestic championship as they beat Alajuelense 1-0 on aggregate in the clausura Final.

The side from San Jose move ahead of Costa Rican rivals Alajuelense and Guatemala's Municipal, who have both won 29 titles, and Olimpia of Honduras who have claimed 28.

GUATEMALA

National promotion

Days after leading Comunicaciones to the clausura title, Ivan Sopegno was named coach of the national team.

"It's an honour to direct the national team of the country I consider to be mine since I have been living here for 20 years," said the Argentinian-born 50-year-old, who has now won five domestic championships with Comunicaciones.

The latest – their fourth on the trot – came with a 2-0 aggregate victory over Municipal, with Jose Manuel Contreras scoring in both legs.

Safe...Comunicaciones' goalkeeper Juan Paredes thwarts Municipal

CLUB FOOTBALL

Monday, April 21
Malaga 2 (Santa Cruz 6, Darder 53)
Villarreal 0 Att: 20,000

Friday, April 25
Elche 1 (Boakye 63)
Levante 1 (Angel 74) Att: 28,425

Saturday, April 26
Betis 0
Real Sociedad 1 (Vela pen 48) Att: 20,600

Getafe 1 (Colunga 7)
Malaga 0 Att: 13,000

Granada 0
Rayo Vallecano 3 (Saul 54, Larrivey 59, Fernandez 86) Att: 20,500

Real Madrid 4 (Cristiano Ronaldo 6, 52, Sergio Ramos 60, Carvajal 83)
Osasuna 0 Att: 69,854

Sunday, April 27
Athletic Bilbao 3 (Susaeta 4, Muniain 53, Ander Herrera 73)
Sevilla 1 (Gameiro 79) Att: 35,630

Espanyol 1 (Stuani 42)
Almeria 2 (Fran Velez 70, Suso 72) Att: 14,768

Valencia 0
Atletico Madrid 1 (Raul Garcia 43) Att: 27,500

Villarreal 2 (Cani 45, Trigueros 55)
Barcelona 3 (Gabriel og 65, Musacchio og 78, Messi 83) Att: 22,839

Monday, April 28
Celta Vigo 4 (Nolito 38, 46, Charles 39, Mitrovic og 49)
Valladolid 1 (Manucho 75) Att: 15,300

Friday, May 2
Rayo Vallecano 0
Athletic Bilbao 3 (San Jose 20, De Marcos 30, Ander Herrera 74) Att: 14,000

Saturday, May 3
Barcelona 2 (Messi 23, Sanchez 67)
Getafe 2 (Lafita 37, 90+2) Att: 70,110

Malaga 0
Elche 1 (Rodrigues 11) Att: 28,000

Osasuna 0
Celta Vigo 2 (Nolito 20, 34) Att: 18,299

Valladolid 1 (Rukavina 20)
Espanyol 0 Att: 15,585

Sunday, May 4
Almeria 3 (Oscar Diaz 52, Aleix Vidal 77, Azeez 90+4)
Betis 2 (Rodriguez 60, Salva Sevilla 71) Att: 9,446

Levante 2 (Filipe Luis og 7, Barral 69)
Atletico Madrid 0 Att: 22,156

Real Madrid 2 (Sergio Ramos 59, C Ronaldo 90+2)
Valencia 2 (Mathieu 44, Parejo 65) Att: 81,044

Sevilla 0
Villarreal 0 Att: 31,372

Monday, May 5
Real Sociedad 1 (Vela 78)
Granada 1 (Ighalo 90+3) Att: 13,813

Wednesday, May 7
Valladolid 1 (Osorio 85)
Real Madrid 1 (Sergio Ramos 35) Att: 22,013

Saturday, May 10
Levante 2 (Angel 71, Ivanschitz 81)
Valencia 0 Att: 20,000

Villarreal 4 (Uche 23, Bruno 42, Jonathan 55, Jaume Costa 64)
Rayo Vallecano 0 Att: 13,000

Sunday, May 11
Athletic Bilbao 1 (Muniain 49)
Real Sociedad 1 (Agirretxe 75) Att: 34,000

Atletico Madrid 1 (Alderweireld 74)
Malaga 1 (Samuel 65) Att: 54,000

Betis 4 (Pena og 6, Jorge Molina 54, Ruben Castro 76, Juanfran 90+1)
Valladolid 3 (Javi Guerra 1, pen 59, Pena 51) Att: 8,000

Celta Vigo 2 (Charles 43, 63)
Real Madrid 0 Att: 27,703

Elche 0
Barcelona 0 Att: 33,069

Espanyol 1 (Colotto 21)
Osasuna 1 (Acuna 44) Att: 21,950

Getafe 1 (Escudero 70)
Sevilla 0 Att: 16,000

Granada 0
Almeria 2 (Verza pen 19, Aleix Vidal pen 84) Att: 18,000

Friday, May 16
Malaga 1 (Portillo 60)
Levante 0 Att: 26,000

Saturday, May 17
Barcelona 1 (Sanchez 33)
Atletico Madrid 1 (Godin 49) Att: 96,973

Real Madrid 3 (Bale 64, Morata 86, 90+1)
Espanyol 1 (Pizzi 90) Att: 45,000

Valencia 2 (Feghouli 41, Piatti 55)
Celta Vigo 1 (Inigo Lopez 5) Att: 25,860

Sunday, May 18
Almeria 0
Athletic Bilbao 0 Att: 12,000

Osasuna 2 (Oriol Riera 12, Acuna 16)
Betis 1 (Chica 70) Att: 19,398

Rayo Vallecano 1 (Trashorras 67)
Getafe 2 (Marica 43, pen 90+2) Att: 8,326

Real Sociedad 1 (Vela 90+2)
Villarreal 2 (Dos Santos 26, Uche 69) Att: 21,140

Sevilla 3 (Iborra 16, 72, Jairo 61)
Elche 1 (Boakye 90) Att: 36,300

Valladolid 0
Granada 1 (Mitrovic og 44) Att: 25,133

SPAIN – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Atletico (C)	38	28	6	4	77	26	90
Barcelona	38	27	6	5	100	33	87
Real Madrid	38	27	6	5	104	38	87
Athletic	38	20	10	8	66	39	70
Sevilla	38	18	9	11	69	52	63
Villarreal	38	17	8	13	60	44	59
Sociedad	38	16	11	11	62	55	59
Valencia	38	13	10	15	51	53	49
Celta	38	14	7	17	49	54	49
Levante	38	12	12	14	35	43	48
Malaga	38	12	9	17	39	46	45
Rayo	38	13	4	21	46	80	43
Getafe	38	11	9	18	35	54	42
Espanyol	38	11	9	18	41	51	42
Granada	38	12	5	21	32	56	41
Elche	38	9	13	16	30	50	40
Almeria	38	11	7	20	43	71	40
Osasuna (R)	38	10	9	19	32	62	39
Valladolid (R)	38	7	15	16	38	60	36
Betis (R)	38	6	7	25	36	78	25

Top goalscorers
31 Cristiano Ronaldo (Real Madrid)
28 Lionel Messi (Barcelona)
27 Diego Costa (Atletico Madrid)
19 Alexis Sanchez (Barcelona)
17 Karim Benzema (Real Madrid)

SPANISH CUP

Final
Apr 16 - Valencia (Mestalla)
Barcelona 1 (Bartra 68)
Real Madrid 2 (Di Maria 11, Bale 85)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 52,953. **Ref:** Mateu Lahoz

SWEDEN

Mar 30: Helsingborg 1 Djurgarden 1 (game suspended after pitch invasion; result stood).
Apr 4: Elfsborg 3 Hacken 1.
Apr 5: Falkenberg 1 Brommapojkarna 0.
Apr 6: Djurgarden 3 Halmstad 0; Norrkoping 2 Helsingborg 0; Gefle 1 AIK 2.
Apr 7: Kalmar 2 Atvidaberg 2; Gothenburg 0 Malmo 3.
Apr 8: Orebro 1 Mjallby 0.
Apr 11: Mjallby 0 Djurgarden 2.
Apr 12: Atvidaberg 2 Falkenberg 0; Malmo 1 Gefle 0.
Apr 13: AIK 1 Orebro 1; Helsingborg 4 Hacken 2; Halmstad 0 Norrkoping 0.
Apr 14: Brommapojkarna 1 Gothenburg 1; Kalmar 0 Elfsborg 0.
Apr 16: Orebro 1 Malmo 2; Norrkoping 1 Mjallby 1; Hacken 3 Halmstad 0; Djurgarden 2 AIK 3.
Apr 17: Gothenburg 5 Atvidaberg 0; Gefle 3 Brommapojkarna 0; Falkenberg 1 Kalmar 3; Elfsborg 1 Helsingborg 0.
Apr 20: Kalmar 1 Gothenburg 1; Halmstad 2 Helsingborg 1; AIK 1 Norrkoping 2; Mjallby 1 Hacken 4.
Apr 21: Falkenberg 2 Elfsborg 3; Atvidaberg 2 Gefle 2; Malmo 2 Djurgarden 2; Brommapojkarna 2 Orebro 2.
Apr 25: Orebro 3 Atvidaberg 2; Gothenburg 1 Falkenberg 0.
Apr 27: Helsingborg 3 Mjallby 1; Djurgarden 3 Brommapojkarna 2; Hacken 2 AIK 2.
Apr 28: Elfsborg 4 Halmstad 1; Gefle 0 Kalmar 2; Norrkoping 1 Malmo 2.
May 3: Mjallby 2 Halmstad 1; Brommapojkarna 3 Norrkoping 0.
May 4: Malmo 1 Hacken 2; Atvidaberg 1 Djurgarden 1; Kalmar 2 Orebro 0; Gothenburg 0 Elfsborg 0.
May 5: Falkenberg 1 Gefle 1; AIK 2 Helsingborg 1.
May 7: Hacken 3 Brommapojkarna 1; Elfsborg 3 Mjallby 1; Djurgarden 0 Kalmar 0; Norrkoping 2 Atvidaberg 1.
May 8: Halmstad 2 AIK 2; Orebro 0 Falkenberg 0; Gefle 1 Gothenburg 1; Helsingborg 0 Malmo 1.
May 10: Kalmar 2 Norrkoping 0.
May 11: AIK 2 Mjallby 1; Gefle 0 Elfsborg 1; Gothenburg 2 Orebro 1.
May 12: Atvidaberg 1 Hacken 0; Malmo 3 Halmstad 1; Brommapojkarna 0 Helsingborg 1; Falkenberg 1 Djurgarden 0.
May 15: Norrkoping 0 Falkenberg 3; Brommapojkarna 0 Mjallby 1; AIK 2 Elfsborg 1.
May 19: Orebro 2 Gefle 2; Halmstad 3 Brommapojkarna 0.
May 20: Hacken 4 Kalmar 1.
May 21: Helsingborg 0 Atvidaberg 0; Djurgarden 0 Gothenburg 0.
May 22: Mjallby 0 Malmo 1.
May 24: Elfsborg 1 Orebro 0; Atvidaberg 1 Halmstad 0; Falkenberg 1 Hacken 1.
May 25: Kalmar 2 Helsingborg 0; Gothenburg 2 Norrkoping 2.
May 26: Gefle 1 Djurgarden 1; Malmo 2 AIK 2.
May 30: Orebro 0 Djurgarden 1.
May 31: Mjallby 1 Atvidaberg 0; Halmstad 1 Kalmar 1.
June 1: Helsingborg 1 Falkenberg 0; Elfsborg 0 Malmo 1.
June 2: AIK 4 Brommapojkarna 2; Norrkoping 1 Gefle 0; Hacken 1 Gothenburg 1.

SWEDEN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Malmo	12	9	2	1	22	9	29
Elfsborg	12	7	2	3	18	10	23
Kalmar	12	6	5	1	18	10	23
AIK	12	6	4	2	23	19	22
Hacken	12	6	3	3	25	16	21
Gothenburg	12	4	7	1	16	10	19
Djurgarden	12	4	6	2	16	11	18
Atvidaberg	12	4	4	4	14	17	16
Norrkoping	12	4	3	5	11	17	15
Helsingborg	12	4	2	6	12	14	14
Orebro	12	3	4	5	13	16	13
Falkenberg	12	3	3	6	10	15	12
Mjallby	12	3	2	7	11	20	11
Gefle	12	1	6	5	13	16	9
Halmstad	12	2	3	7	12	22	9
Bromm'karna	12	1	2	9	12	24	5

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated, 3rd bottom will enter rel/prom play-off

SWITZERLAND

Apr 5: St Gallen 4 Aarau 1; Grasshopper 2 Zurich 0.
Apr 6: Lausanne 0 Sion 1; Basle 0 Thun 0; Young Boys 2 Lucerne 1.
Apr 12: Thun 2 Aarau 0; Lausanne 0 Grasshopper 2.
Apr 13: Sion 0 Basle 1; Lucerne 1 St Gallen 0; Zurich 2 Young Boys 2.
Apr 16: Grasshopper 0 Thun 5; Aarau 1 Lucerne 2; Basle 4 Zurich 2.
Apr 17: Young Boys 0 Sion 0; St Gallen 0 Lausanne 0.
Apr 26: Zurich 1 Lucerne 2; Sion 2 Aarau 0.
Apr 27: Thun 4 St Gallen 0; Lausanne 0 Young Boys 1; Basle 1 Grasshopper 1.
May 3: Thun 1 Zurich 2; Lucerne 0 Sion 1.
May 4: St Gallen 0 Basle 3; Aarau 3 Lausanne 1; Grasshopper 5 Young Boys 0.
May 6: Sion 1 Zurich 0.
May 7: Grasshopper 2 St Gallen 0; Young Boys 2 Aarau 2; Basle 3 Lucerne 1.

HONDURAS

Perfect seven

Olimpia beat Marathon on penalties to win the clausura title. Their 28th league crown means the Tegucigalpa-based side join El Salvador's Isidro Metapan as the only clubs to qualify for all seven editions of the CONCACAF Champions League since it was reconfigured in 2008.

Crucial...Pavone

MEXICO

Club World Cup entry

Cruz Azul will compete in the Club World Cup for the first time after beating Toluca on away goals to win the CONCACAF Champions League.

After a goalless home leg, Mariano Pavone scored the crucial away goal, with Edgar Benitez replying.

Leon won the clausura play-off Final, beating Pachuca 4-3 on aggregate to claim back-to-back titles. Tigres won the Copa MX for the first time in 19 years, beating second division Oaxaca 3-0 in the clausura Final.

NICARAGUA

Eight in a row

Real Esteli broke Hercules of El Salvador's continental record of seven straight domestic titles with an eighth win, beating Diriangen 2-1 on aggregate in the clausura Final.

USA

Latest member

Atlanta will become an MLS franchise when they join the competition in 2017. A Miami franchise is also scheduled to join.

May 8: Lausanne 1 Thun 3.
May 10: Zurich 2 St Gallen 2; Aarau 4 Grasshopper 0.
May 11: Sion 3 Thun 1; Lucerne 3 Lausanne 4; Young Boys 3 Basle 1.
May 15: Grasshopper 4 Lucerne 1; Thun 0 Young Boys 3; St Gallen 2 Sion 0; Aarau 1 Basle 3; Lausanne 0 Zurich 1.
May 18: Basle 4 Lausanne 2; Zurich 2 Aarau 2; Young Boys 2 St Gallen 0; Sion 3 Grasshopper 1; Lucerne 3 Thun 0.

SWITZERLAND – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Basle (C)	36	19	15	2	70	34	72
Grasshopper	36	19	8	9	67	43	65
Young Boys	36	17	8	11	59	50	59
Lucerne	36	15	6	15	48	54	51
Zurich	36	14	8	14	51	52	50
Thun	36	13	9	14	57	53	48
St Gallen	36	11	12	13	37	47	45
Sion	36	12	7	17	38	45	43
Aarau	36	12	6	18	55	71	42
Lausanne (R)	36	7	3	26	38	71	24

TURKEY

Mar 10: Trabzonspor 0 Fenerbahce 3 (awarded).
Apr 4: Gaziantepspor 2 Kasimpasa 2.
Apr 5: Akhisar 0 Eskisehirspor 0; Antalyaspor 1 Konyaspor 1; Rizespor 0 Karabukspor 1; Besiktas 2 Kayserispor 1.
Apr 6: Kayseri Erciyesspor 3 Elazigspor 0; Bursaspor 4 Sivasspor 3; Galatasaray 1 Fenerbahce 0.
Apr 7: Trabzonspor 3 Genclerbirligi 0.
Apr 11: Konyaspor 1 Besiktas 1.
Apr 12: Kasimpasa 1 Bursaspor 1; Karabukspor 0 Akhisar 2; Sivasspor 2 Galatasaray 1; Kayserispor 0 Rizespor 2.
Apr 13: Genclerbirligi 0 Kayseri Erciyesspor 0; Eskisehirspor 2 Trabzonspor 2; Fenerbahce 4 Antalyaspor 1.
Apr 14: Elazigspor 2 Gaziantepspor 1.
Apr 18: Kayseri Erciyesspor 0 Trabzonspor 5.
Apr 19: Gaziantepspor 0 Genclerbirligi 1; Akhisar 2 Kayserispor 2; Bursaspor 1 Elazigspor 0; Galatasaray 0 Kasimpasa 4.
Apr 20: Rizespor 3 Konyaspor 1; Besiktas 1 Fenerbahce 1.
Apr 21: Antalyaspor 1 Sivasspor 2; Karabukspor 0 Eskisehirspor 0.
Apr 25: Genclerbirligi 1 Bursaspor 0.
Apr 26: Trabzonspor 2 Gaziantepspor 1.
Apr 27: Konyaspor 4 Akhisar 0; Fenerbahce 0 Rizespor 0; Elazigspor 0 Galatasaray 1; Kasimpasa 2 Antalyaspor 0; Eskisehirspor 0 Kayseri Erciyesspor 1; Sivasspor 3 Besiktas 0; Kayserispor 1 Karabukspor 3.
May 3: Kayseri Erciyesspor 1 Gaziantepspor 0; Karabukspor 2 Konyaspor 2; Eskisehirspor 1 Kayserispor 4; Antalyaspor 1 Elazigspor 2; Besiktas 2 Kasimpasa 1; Galatasaray 3 Genclerbirligi 2.
May 4: Rizespor 1 Sivasspor 1; Bursaspor 2 Trabzonspor 2; Akhisar 3 Fenerbahce 1.
May 9: Fenerbahce 4 Karabukspor 0.
May 10: Genclerbirligi 1 Antalyaspor 2.
May 11: Kayseri Erciyesspor 1 Bursaspor 1; Sivasspor 3 Akhisar 1; Kasimpasa 1 Rizespor 1; Elazigspor 0 Besiktas 1; Gaziantepspor 1 Eskisehirspor 1; Konyaspor 3 Kayserispor 0; Trabzonspor 1 Galatasaray 4.
May 16: Eskisehirspor 1 Konyaspor 1; Kayserispor 0 Fenerbahce 2.
May 17: Rizespor 3 Elazigspor 1; Bursaspor 3 Gaziantepspor 1; Galatasaray 2 Kayseri Erciyesspor 1; Besiktas 1 Genclerbirligi 1.
May 18: Karabukspor 1 Sivasspor 0; Akhisar 1 Kasimpasa 3; Antalyaspor 0 Trabzonspor 2.

TURKEY – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Fenerbahce (C)	34	23	5	6	74	33	74
Galatasaray	34	18	11	5	59	32	65
Besiktas	34	17	11	6	53	33	62
Trabzonspor	34	14	11	9	53	41	53
Sivasspor	34	16	5	13	60	55	53
Kasimpasa	34	13	12	9	56	39	51
Karabukspor	34	13	11	10	33	34	50
Bursaspor	34	12	10	12	40	46	46
Genclerbirligi	34	13	6	15	39	43	45
Akhisar	34	12	8	14	44	55	44
Konyaspor	34	11	9	14	48	45	42
Eskisehirspor	34	10	12	12	33	35	42
Rizespor	34	10	12	12	43	43	42
K Erciyesspor	34	10	7	17	34	50	37
Gaziantepspor	34	10	7	17	38	58	37
Elazigspor (R)	34	10	4	20	38	62	34
Antalyaspor (R)	34	6	13	15	34	47	31
Kayserispor (R)	34	7	8	19	30	58	29

TURKISH CUP

Final

May 7 - Konya (Ataturk)
Eskisehirspor 0
Galatasaray 1 (Sneijder 70)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 22,456. **Ref:** Gocek

UKRAINE

Apr 4: Sevastopol 1 Vorskla 0.
Apr 5: Tavriya 0 Dnipro 2; Shakhtar 3 Karpaty 0; Hoverla 0 Metalurh Donetsk 0.
Apr 6: Chornomorets 3 Metalurh Zaporizhya 0; Zorya 3 Illichivets 0; Dynamo 4 Metalist 2.
Apr 11: Illichivets 1 Volyn 0; Metalurh Donetsk 3 Sevastopol 0.
Apr 12: Vorskla 1 Shakhtar 0; Karpaty 2 Dynamo 2; Zorya 1 Chornomorets 0; Dnipro 1 Metalurh Zaporizhya 0.
Apr 13: Metalist 1 Tavriya 0.
Apr 15: Dnipro 5 Volyn 1.
Apr 16: Metalurh Zaporizhya 0 Hoverla 1; Metalurh Donetsk 3 Chornomorets 2; Karpaty 0 Illichivets 1; Dynamo 0 Shakhtar 2.
Apr 17: Tavriya 0 Sevastopol 2; Metalist 1 Zorya 1.
Apr 19: Hoverla 1 Illichivets 2; Shakhtar 2 Metalurh Donetsk 1.
Apr 20: Tavriya 0 Karpaty 1; Volyn 0 Zorya 2; Metalurh Zaporizhya 0 Metalist 3; Dynamo 2 Vorskla 1; Chornomorets 1 Dnipro 0.
Apr 23: Sevastopol 5 Metalurh Zaporizhya 0; Zorya 2 Karpaty 2; Shakhtar 2 Tavriya 1.
Apr 24: Illichivets 1 Vorskla 2; Hoverla 0 Dnipro 2; Chornomorets 1 Dynamo 1; Volyn 1 Metalist 4.
Apr 27: Illichivets 0 Sevastopol 0; Karpaty 2 Metalurh Zaporizhya 2; Zorya 1 Hoverla 0; Metalurh Donetsk 2 Dynamo 1; Metalist 2 Dnipro 1.
Apr 28: Vorskla 1 Tavriya 1; Volyn 1 Chornomorets 2.
May 2: Sevastopol 0 Zorya 2; Chornomorets 1 Metalist 1; Shakhtar 3 Illichivets 1.
May 3: Metalurh Zaporizhya 0 Vorskla 1.
May 4: Tavriya 0 Metalurh Donetsk 1; Hoverla 6 Volyn 0; Dnipro 1 Karpaty 4.
May 7: Sevastopol 0 Metalist 2.
May 11: Volyn 1 Sevastopol 2; Zorya 1 Shakhtar 3; Metalurh Donetsk 2 Metalurh Zaporizhya 0; Hoverla 1 Chornomorets 1; Illichivets 0 Dynamo 2; Vorskla 1 Dnipro 4; Karpaty 2 Metalist 4.
May 16: Tavriya 0 Illichivets 3.
May 17: Sevastopol 3 Hoverla 0 (awarded).
May 18: Chornomorets 0 Karpaty 0; Metalist 1 Vorskla 0; Dnipro 3 Metalurh Donetsk 1; Dynamo 3 Zorya 1; Shakhtar 2 Volyn 0.

UKRAINE – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Shakhtar (C)	28	21	2	5	62	23	65
Dnipro	28	18	5	5	56	28	59
Metalist	28	16	9	3	54	29	57
Dynamo	28	16	5	7	55	33	53
Chornomorets	28	12	10	6	30	22	46
Metalurh D	28	12	7	9	45	42	43
Zorya	28	11	9	8	35	30	42
Vorskla	28	10	10	8	36	38	40
Sevastopol	28	10	5	13	32	43	35
Illichivets	28	10	4	14	27	33	34
Karpaty	28	7	11	10	33	39	32
Hoverla	28	7	5	16	26	39	26
Volyn[1]	28	7	6	15	25	51	24
Metalurh Z	28	2	6	20	19	54	12
Tavriya (R)	28	2	4	22	15	46	10
Arsenal[2] (R)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

[1]3pts deducted for breaching financial rules
[2]Arsenal expelled from league after going bankrupt; results annulled

WALES

Division split after 22-round regular season; teams carried forward full regular-season record

WALES – CHAMPIONSHIP GROUP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
New Saints (C)	32	22	7	3	86	20	73
Airbus UK[1]	32	17	9	6	56	34	59
Carmarthen	32	14	6	12	54	51	48
Bangor	32	14	6	12	47	50	48
Newtown	32	12	6	14	46	58	42
Rhyl	32	11	5	16	43	49	38

[1]1pt deducted for a player registration irregularity

WALES – RELEGATION GROUP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Aberystwyth[2]	32	15	9	8	72	48	51
Bala	32	13	6	13	61	45	45
Port Talbot	32	10	8	14	45	53	38
Connah's Quay	32	10	8	14	47	65	38
Prestatyn	32	9	8	15	42	47	35
Afan Lido (R)	32	3	6	23	21	100	15

[2]3pts deducted for fielding an ineligible player

SOUTH AMERICA

LIBERTADORES CUP

Group 1

Apr 8
The Strongest (Bol) 2 (Manoel og 38, Soliz 55)
Atletico Paranaense (Bra) 1 (Adriano 45+3)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Zambrano (Ecu)

Apr 8
Velez Sarsfield (Arg) 1 (Nanni 52)
Universitario (Per) 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Ulloa (Chl)

LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP 1 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Velez (Q)	6	5	0	1	9	3	15
Strongest (Q)	6	3	1	2	8	7	10
At Paranaense	6	3	0	3	7	7	9
Universitario	6	0	1	5	3	10	1

Group 2

Apr 2
Botafogo (Bra) 0
Union Espanola (Chl) 1 (Canales pen 72)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Fedorczuk (Uru)

Apr 9
San Lorenzo (Arg) 3 (Villalba 29, Piatti 54, 89)
Botafogo 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Soto (Ven)

Apr 9
Union Espanola 4 (Campos 12, 59, F Leon og 66, Canales pen 73)
Independiente (Ecu) 5 (D Angulo 13, 49, 58, 76, Sornoza pen 78)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Quintana (Par)

LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP 2 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Espanola (Q)	6	2	3	1	10	9	9
San Lorenzo (Q)	6	2	2	2	6	5	8
Independiente	6	2	2	2	10	10	8
Botafogo	6	2	1	3	5	7	7

Group 3

Apr 8
Cerro Porteno (Par) 3 (Payares og 37, Guiza 45, Dos Santos pen 80)
Deportivo Cali (Col) 2 (Marrugo 12, Rivas 62)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Ubriaco (Uru)
Sent off: Perez (Dep Cali) 79min

Apr 8
O'Higgins (Chl) 0
Lanus (Arg) 0
Ref: Sampaio (Bra)
Sent off: S Silva (Lanus) 86min; Hernandez (O'Higgins) 88min

LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP 3 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
C Porteno (Q)	6	3	1	2	10	9	10
Lanus (Q)	6	2	2	2	6	5	8
O'Higgins	6	1	4	1	5	5	7
Dep Cali	6	2	1	3	6	8	7

Group 4

Apr 3
Independiente Santa Fe (Col) 1 (Cuero 63)
Atletico Mineiro (Bra) 1 (Guilherme 8)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Laverni (Arg)

Apr 10
Atletico Mineiro 1 (Jo 10)
Zamora (Ven) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Tobar (Chl)
Sent off: Espana (Zamora) 73min

Apr 10
Nacional (Par) 3 (Benitez 38, Bareiro 48, Torales 84)
Independiente Santa Fe 2 (Medina 31, pen 82)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Vazquez (Uru)

LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP 4 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
At Mineiro (Q)	6	3	3	0	8	5	12
Nacional (Q)	6	2	2	2	8	10	8
Zamora	6	2	1	3	6	6	7
Ind Santa Fe	6	1	2	3	10	11	5

Group 5

Apr 1
Real Garcilaso (Per) 0
Defensor Sporting (Uru) 2 (Amado 50, De Arrascaeta 54)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Quintana (Par)

Apr 3
Universidad de Chile (Chl) 0
Cruzeiro (Bra) 2 (Bruno Rodrigo 16, Samudio 40)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Delfino (Arg)
Sent off: Caruzzo (Universidad) 84min; Samudio (Cruzeiro) 87min

ALGERIA

Hero turned villain

MC Alger beat JS Kabylie on penalties to win the Algerian Cup after drawing 1-1 in 90 minutes. JS Kabylie captain Ali Rial scored from the penalty spot to cancel out his earlier own goal and send the game to spot-kicks, but he then missed the vital fifth kick.

Tragedy...Stade Tata Raphael

DR CONGO

Stampede kills 15

At least 15 people were killed and more than a dozen injured at the Stade Tata Raphael in Kinshasa as TP Mazembe beat AS Vita Club 1-0 to win the league title. The tragedy occurred after police fired tear gas to quell supporters and provoked a stampede in the crowd.

GHANA

Champions again

Asante Kotoko claimed a third consecutive Premier League title with two games to go with a 2-1 win away to Edubiase United.

MOROCCO

Cup hosts

Moghreb Tetouan beat RS Berkan 2-1 to win the Moroccan league title for the second time in their history and qualify for December's Club World Cup as the host side.

Abdelmoula Hardoumi scored both Tetouan goals, with Lahcen Akhmiss getting a late consolation. Raja Casablanca had been the title favourites, but a defeat to Olympic Safi handed Tetouan their first title since 2012.

Apr 9
Cruzeiro 3 (Ricardo Goulart 24, Bruno Rodrigo 27, Julio Baptista 42)
Real Garcilaso 0
HT: 3-0. **Ref:** Velez (Col)

Apr 9
Defensor Sporting 1 (Alonso 57)
Universidad de Chile 1 (Fernandez 39)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Loustau (Arg)
Sent off: Civelli (Universidad) 90+3min

LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP 5 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Defensor (Q)	6	3	2	1	11	5	11
Cruzeiro (Q)	6	3	1	2	13	7	10
Univ de Chile	6	3	1	2	6	9	10
Real Garcilaso	6	1	0	5	4	13	3

Group 6

Apr 2
Atletico Nacional (Col) 0
Gremio (Bra) 2 (Dudu 53, Barcos 69)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Caceres (Par)

Apr 10
Gremio 1 (Barcos pen 13)
Nacional (Uru) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Maldonado (Bol)

Apr 10
Newell's Old Boys (Arg) 1 (Casco 17)
Atletico Nacional 3 (Trellez 8, Cardenas 14, Berrio 55)
HT: 1-2. **Ref:** Arias (Par)
Sent off: Lopez (Newell's) 5min; Cardona (Atletico Nacional) 5min

LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP 6 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Gremio (Q)	6	4	2	0	8	1	14
At Nacional (Q)	6	3	1	2	7	8	10
Newell's	6	2	2	2	10	7	8
Nacional	6	0	1	5	4	13	1

Group 7

Apr 2
Emelec (Ecu) 1 (Stracqualursi pen 66)
Flamengo (Bra) 2 (Alecsandro pen 9, Paulinho 90+2)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Bascunan (Chl)

Apr 9
Bolivar (Bol) 2 (Ferreira 2, Juanmi Callejon 51)
Emelec 1 (Escalada 88)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Vigliano (Arg)

Apr 9
Flamengo 2 (Andre Santos 30, Alecsandro 34)
Leon (Mex) 3 (Arizala 21, Boselli 31, Pena 84)
HT: 2-2. **Ref:** Abal (Arg)

LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP 7 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bolivar (Q)	6	3	2	1	8	6	11
Leon (Q)	6	3	1	2	10	7	10
Flamengo	6	2	1	3	10	10	7
Emelec	6	2	0	4	7	12	6

Group 8

Apr 10
Arsenal (Arg) 3 (Zelaya 21, Echeverria 54, Marc Crosas og 74)
Santos Laguna (Mex) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** De Lima Henrique (Bra)

Apr 10
Penarol (Uru) 1 (Silva 8)
Anzoategui (Ven) 1 (Aguilar 65)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Haro (Per)

LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP 8 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Santos (Q)	6	4	1	1	11	5	13
Arsenal (Q)	6	4	0	2	11	4	12
Penarol	6	1	2	3	5	10	5
Anzoategui	6	0	3	3	4	12	3

Top 2 in each group qualified for 1st knockout round

1st knockout round

1st legs

Apr 16
Cruzeiro 1 (Samudio 90+4)
Cerro Porteno 1 (A Romero 32)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Fedorczuk (Uru)

Apr 16
Lanus 2 (Monteseirin 66, Martinez 90+5)
Santos Laguna 1 (Quintero 58)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Polic (Chl)

Apr 16
Leon 2 (Montes 21, Boselli 86)
Bolivar 2 (Juanmi Callejon 45, Arce 71)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Amarilla (Par)
Sent off: Gonzalez (Leon) 79min

Apr 17
The Strongest 2 (Reinoso 69, Castro 79)
Defensor Sporting 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** De Lima Henrique (Bra)

Apr 23
Atletico Nacional 1 (Cardenas 90+1)
Atletico Mineiro 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Vazquez (Uru)

Apr 23
Nacional (Par) 1 (Benitez 87)
Velez Sarsfield 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Lopes (Bra)

Apr 23
San Lorenzo 1 (Correa 52)
Gremio 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Osses (Chl)

Apr 24
Arsenal 0
Union Espanola 0
Ref: Carrillo (Per)
Sent off: Echeverria (Arsenal) 87min

2nd legs

Apr 22
Bolivar 1 (Eguino 36)
Leon 1 (Arizala 6)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Velez (Col)
Agg 3-3; Bolivar on away goals
Sent off: Marquez (Leon) 77min

Apr 23
Santos Laguna 0
Lanus 2 (Blanco 28, Goltz pen 51)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Ubriaco (Uru)
Lanus 4-1 on agg
Sent off: Renteria (Santos) 74min

Apr 29
Defensor Sporting 2 (De Arrascaeta 60, Olivera 65)
The Strongest 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Arias (Par)
Agg 2-2; Defensor 4-2 on pens

Apr 29
Velez Sarsfield 2 (Correa 75, 85)
Nacional (Par) 2 (Torales pen 79, Orue 90+4)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Ricci (Bra)
Nacional 3-2 on agg
Sent off: Romero 78min, Canteros 87min (both Velez)

Apr 30
Cerro Porteno 0
Cruzeiro 2 (Dede 80, Dagoberto 90+4)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Ubriaco (Uru)
Cruzeiro 3-1 on agg
Sent off: Bruno Rodrigo (Cruzeiro) 78min; Corujo 84min, Guiza 85min (both Cerro Porteno)

Apr 30
Gremio 1 (Dudu 83)
San Lorenzo 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Silvera (Uru)
Agg 1-1; San Lorenzo 4-2 on pens

Apr 30
Union Espanola 0
Arsenal 1 (Braghieri 66)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Marques Ribeiro (Bra)
Arsenal 1-0 on agg

May 1
Atletico Mineiro 1 (Fernandinho 20)
Atletico Nacional 1 (Duque 88)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Loustau (Arg)
Atletico Nacional 2-1 on agg

Quarter-finals

1st legs

May 7
Nacional (Par) 1 (Orue 36)
Arsenal 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Roldan (Col)
Sent off: Marcone (Arsenal) 90+5min

May 7
San Lorenzo 1 (Gentiletti 65)
Cruzeiro 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Arias (Par)

May 8
Atletico Nacional 0
Defensor Sporting 2 (Pais 77, Olivera 83)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Pitana (Arg)
Sent off: Cardona (Atletico Nacional) 86min

May 8
Lanus 1 (Benitez 8)
Bolivar 1 (Ferreira 90+1)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Carrillo (Per)

2nd legs

May 14
Arsenal 0
Nacional (Par) 0
Ref: Vuaden (Bra)
Nacional 1-0 on agg

May 14
Cruzeiro 1 (Bruno Rodrigo 71)
San Lorenzo 1 (Piatti 10)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Vazquez (Uru)
San Lorenzo 2-1 on agg
Sent off: Romagnoli (San Lorenzo) 77min

May 15
Bolivar 1 (Arce 87)
Lanus 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Zambrano (Ecu)
Bolivar 2-1 on agg
Sent off: Izquierdoz (Lanus) 59min

May 15
Defensor Sporting 1 (Olivera 89)
Atletico Nacional 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Osses (Chl)
Defensor 3-0 on agg

Semi-finals draw

Nacional (Par) v Defensor Sporting (July 22 & 29)
San Lorenzo v Bolivar (July 23 & 30)

ARGENTINA

2nd tournament

Apr 1: Quilmes 1 Belgrano 0; Olimpo 1 Velez 2; Racing 3 Estudiantes 3; Argentinos 0 Rafaela 0.
Apr 2: Godoy Cruz 1 Lanus 0; Colon 1 All Boys 0; River Plate 1 Newell's 0; Rosario 2 Boca 1.
Apr 3: Gimnasia 3 Tigre 1; San Lorenzo 2 Arsenal 0.
Apr 5: Velez 0 Racing 1; Lanus 1 Colon 0.
Apr 6: Newell's 0 Rosario 1; Rafaela 2 Quilmes 2; Arsenal 0 Tigre 1; All Boys 1 San Lorenzo 2; Boca 3 Godoy Cruz 0; Belgrano 2 River Plate 1.
Apr 7: Estudiantes 1 Argentinos 0.
Apr 8: Olimpo 0 Gimnasia 2.
Apr 11: Rosario 0 Belgrano 0; Tigre 2 All Boys 0.
Apr 12: Quilmes 1 Estudiantes 3; Argentinos 2 Velez 1; San Lorenzo 1 Lanus 4; Racing 1 Olimpo 1.
Apr 13: Gimnasia 2 Arsenal 0; Godoy Cruz 0 Newell's 1; River 2 Rafaela 0; Colon 0 Boca 0.
Apr 15: Olimpo 3 Argentinos 0; Velez 1 Quilmes 3.
Apr 16: Rafaela 2 Rosario 3; Estudiantes 0 River Plate 0; Boca 0 San Lorenzo 0; Newell's 0 Colon 1.
Apr 17: All Boys 1 Arsenal 1; Belgrano 1 Godoy Cruz 2; Racing 0 Gimnasia 1.
Apr 19: Rosario 0 Estudiantes 0; Quilmes 0 Olimpo 1; San Lorenzo 0 Newell's 0.
Apr 20: Colon 0 Belgrano 0; Argentinos 0 Racing 1; Arsenal 3 Lanus 1; Tigre 0 Boca 1; River Plate 1 Velez 0.
Apr 21: Godoy Cruz 3 Rafaela 0; Gimnasia 2 All Boys 1.
Apr 25: Newell's 2 Tigre 1.
Apr 26: Belgrano 0 San Lorenzo 0; Rafaela 1 Colon 1; Argentinos 0 Gimnasia 2; Velez 4 Rosario 1; Racing 0 Quilmes 1.
Apr 27: Estudiantes 0 Godoy Cruz 1; Lanus 1 All Boys 0; Boca 4 Arsenal 2; Olimpo 1 River Plate 1.
Apr 30: Lanus 0 Tigre 0.
May 2: Quilmes 1 Argentinos 0.
May 3: Colon 0 Estudiantes 2; Rosario 0 Olimpo 0; San Lorenzo 2 Rafaela 0; Godoy Cruz 1 Velez 1.
May 4: Arsenal 3 Newell's 2; Gimnasia 0 Lanus 0; River Plate 3 Racing 2; All Boys 1 Boca 3.
May 5: Tigre 2 Belgrano 1.
May 9: Olimpo 3 Godoy 1.
May 10: Estudiantes 3 San Lorenzo 0; Newell's 4 All Boys 2; Rafaela 1 Tigre 1; Racing 0 Rosario 0; Velez 2 Colon 0.
May 11: Belgrano 0 Arsenal 0; Quilmes 2 Gimnasia 0; Boca 3 Lanus 1; Argentinos 0 River Plate 2.
May 16: All Boys 0 Belgrano 0.
May 17: Rosario 3 Argentinos 2.
May 18: Arsenal 1 Rafaela 2; Colon 2 Olimpo 1; Godoy Cruz 2 Racing 1; Gimnasia 0 Boca 1; Tigre 2 Estudiantes 1; River Plate 5 Quilmes 0; Lanus 1 Newell's 1.
May 19: San Lorenzo 2 Velez 3.

On top...Tetouan (in stripes)

RWANDA

Opposition no-show

APR won the national title without kicking a ball when their opponents, Muhanga, failed to turn up for the game in Kigali due to a players' strike over unpaid wages. APR finished two points ahead of last season's champions Rayon Sports to claim their 14th national title.

Double...Pirates' Erasmus

SOUTH AFRICA

Cup luck changes

After losing in the Finals of this year's CAF Champions League, South African League Cup and the Top 8 Cup, Orlando Pirates made it fourth time lucky in the South African FA Cup.

Trailing to a Jabulani Shongwe goal against Wits University in the Final, they came back to win 3-1 with goals from Kermit Erasmus (two) and former Wits midfielder Sifiso Myeni.

TUNISIA

Another title

Esperance won the league title with two games to spare following their 1-0 victory over US Monastir. The club have been champions for five of the past six seasons.

ARGENTINA – 2ND TOURNAMENT – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
River Plate (C)	19	11	4	4	28	15	37
Boca	19	9	5	5	25	15	32
Estudiantes	19	8	8	3	20	11	32
Godoy Cruz	19	9	5	5	23	18	32
Gimnasia	19	9	4	6	24	19	31
Velez	19	9	3	7	34	26	30
Colon (R)[1]	19	8	6	5	14	13	30
Rosario	19	7	7	5	21	21	28
Lanus	19	8	4	7	21	23	28
Olimpo	19	7	6	6	19	16	27
San Lorenzo	19	7	6	6	19	20	27
Newell's	19	6	7	6	22	18	25
Tigre	19	5	9	5	14	14	24
Quilmes	19	7	3	9	16	22	24
Belgrano	19	3	11	5	17	21	20
Rafaela[1]	19	4	8	7	22	28	20
Arsenal	19	5	3	11	19	28	18
Racing	19	4	5	10	19	24	17
Argentinos (R)[1]	19	3	6	10	9	21	15
All Boys (R)[1]	19	3	6	10	14	27	15

[1]The 3 teams with the worst points-per-game average over the 3 most recent seasons were relegated; Colon & Rafaela had the joint 3rd worst average, so met in a play-off to decide which of them would go down – Rafaela won it to stay up and relegate Colon

Top goalscorers

13 Mauro Zarate (Velez)
9 Guido Carrillo (Estudiantes)
8 Fernando Cavenaghi (River Plate)
8 Emmanuel Gigliotti (Boca)
7 Jose Valencia (Olimpo)

Overall 2013-14 season Final

(1st tournament winners, San Lorenzo v 2nd tournament winners, River Plate)
May 24 - La Punta (Juan Gilberto Funes)
San Lorenzo 0
River Plate 1 (Pezzella 73)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Pitana

BRAZIL

Apr 19: Fluminense 3 Figueirense 0; Internacional 1 Vitoria 0; Chapecoense 0 Coritiba 0.
Apr 20: Sao Paulo 3 Botafogo 0; Paranaense 1 Gremio 0; Mineiro 0 Corinthians 0; Bahia 1 Cruzeiro 2; Flamengo 0 Goias 0; Santos 1 Sport 1; Criciuma 1 Palmeiras 2.
Apr 26: Coritiba 0 Santos 0; Palmeiras 0 Fluminense 1.
Apr 27: Botafogo 2 Internacional 2; Corinthians 2 Flamengo 0; Cruzeiro 1 Sao Paulo 1; Vitoria 2 Paranaense 2; Sport 2 Chapecoense 1; Gremio 2 Mineiro 1; Figueirense 0 Bahia 2; Goias 1 Criciuma 0.
May 3: Sao Paulo 2 Coritiba 2; Santos 0 Gremio 0; Paranaense 2 Cruzeiro 3; Fluminense 1 Vitoria 2.
May 4: Flamengo 4 Palmeiras 2; Bahia 1 Botafogo 0; Internacional 2 Sport 1; Criciuma 1 Figueirense 0; Mineiro 0 Goias 1; Chapecoense 0 Corinthians 1.
May 10: Palmeiras 2 Goias 0; Internacional 2 Paranaense 1; Botafogo 6 Criciuma 0.
May 11: Fluminense 2 Flamengo 0; Sao Paulo 1 Corinthians 1; Mineiro 2 Cruzeiro 1; Chapecoense 1 Gremio 2; Coritiba 0 Sport 1; Bahia 1 Vitoria 1; Figueirense 0 Santos 2.
May 14: Goias 2 Botafogo 0.
May 17: Cruzeiro 3 Coritiba 2.
May 18: Flamengo 0 Sao Paulo 2; Paranaense 1 Chapecoense 1; Gremio 1 Fluminense 0; Santos 1 Mineiro 2; Vitoria 0 Palmeiras 1; Criciuma 0 Internacional 0; Corinthians 0 Figueirense 1.
May 21: Flamengo 1 Bahia 1; Coritiba 1 Internacional 1; Cruzeiro 2 Sport 0; Criciuma 1 Chapecoense 0; Fluminense 5 Sao Paulo 2; Corinthians 1 Paranaense 1; Gremio 2 Botafogo 1.
May 22: Palmeiras 1 Figueirense 0; Goias 2 Santos 2; Vitoria 2 Mineiro 3.
May 24: Bahia 0 Fluminense 1; Sao Paulo 1 Gremio 0.
May 25: Botafogo 1 Vitoria 1; Sport 1 Corinthians 4; Santos 0 Flamengo 0; Mineiro 0 Criciuma 0; Figueirense 0 Goias 1; Paranaense 2 Coritiba 0; Internacional 1 Cruzeiro 3; Chapecoense 2 Palmeiras 0.
May 28: Sport 0 Gremio 0; Palmeiras 0 Botafogo 2; Criciuma 1 Coritiba 0; Internacional 2 Chapecoense 0; Goias 0 Vitoria 0; Corinthians 1 Cruzeiro 0; Paranaense 2 Sao Paulo 2; Mineiro 2 Fluminense 0.
May 29: Flamengo 1 Figueirense 1; Bahia 0 Santos 2.
May 31: Sao Paulo 2 Mineiro 1; Vitoria 0 Sport 1; Coritiba 3 Goias 0.
June 1: Corinthians 1 Botafogo 1; Fluminense 1 Internacional 1; Cruzeiro 3 Flamengo 0; Chapecoense 2 Bahia 1; Santos 2 Criciuma 0; Gremio 0 Palmeiras 0; Figueirense 1 Paranaense 3.

BRAZIL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cruzeiro	9	6	1	2	18	10	19
Fluminense	9	5	1	3	14	8	16
Corinthians	9	4	4	1	11	5	16
Sao Paulo	9	4	4	1	16	12	16
Internacional	9	4	4	1	12	9	16
Gremio	9	4	3	2	7	5	15
Goias	9	4	3	2	7	7	15
Mineiro	9	4	2	3	11	9	14
Santos	9	3	5	1	10	5	14
Palmeiras	9	4	1	4	8	10	13
Paranaense	9	4	1	4	15	12	13
Sport	8	3	2	3	7	10	11
Criciuma	9	3	2	4	4	11	11
Botafogo	9	2	3	4	13	12	9
Bahia	8	2	2	4	7	9	8
Chapecoense	9	2	2	5	7	10	8
Coritiba	9	1	4	4	8	10	7
Vitoria	9	1	4	4	8	11	7
Flamengo	9	1	4	4	6	13	7
Figueirense	9	1	1	7	3	14	4

38-round season (19x2); bottom 4 will be relegated

CHILE

CHILE – CLAUSURA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Colo Colo (C)	17	13	3	1	45	20	42
Univ Catolica	17	10	3	4	32	19	33
O'Higgins	17	8	6	3	20	12	30
U Concepcion	17	7	6	4	20	17	27
Palestino	17	7	5	5	25	20	26
Huachipato	17	7	4	6	31	28	25
Iquique	17	8	1	8	23	24	25
Cobreloa	17	6	4	7	21	22	22
Espanola	17	6	4	7	25	34	22
Cobresal	17	6	3	8	23	25	21
Antofagasta	17	5	6	6	19	23	21
Univ Chile	17	6	2	9	27	27	20
La Calera	17	6	2	9	21	28	20
Audax Italiano	17	4	7	6	22	22	19
Wanderers	17	5	4	8	22	24	19
Everton (R)[1]	17	5	4	8	16	27	19
Nublense	17	5	2	10	21	30	17
Rangers (R)[1]	17	4	4	9	15	26	16

[1]The 2 teams with fewest points in the combined apertura/clausura table were relegated

COLOMBIA

Apertura

Final, 1st leg
May 18
Junior 1 (Toloza 55)
Atletico Nacional 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 40,000. **Ref:** Sanchez

Final, 2nd leg
May 21
Atletico Nacional 2 (Henriquez 3, Valoy 90+3)
Junior 1 (Toloza 17)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 40,051. **Ref:** Machado
Agg 2-2; Atletico Nacional 4-2 on pens

URUGUAY

URUGUAY – CLAUSURA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Wanderers (C)	15	11	1	3	36	18	34
Penarol	15	10	3	2	32	13	33
Nacional	15	9	0	6	26	18	27
River Plate	15	8	2	5	21	16	26
Danubio	15	7	4	4	24	20	25
Fenix	15	7	3	5	27	19	24
Racing	15	7	3	5	19	18	24
Juventud	15	6	3	6	23	25	21
Defensor	15	5	5	5	25	26	20
Cerro	15	6	2	7	23	27	20
Rentistas	15	6	2	7	18	23	20
Sud America	15	5	3	7	19	24	18
Liverpool (R)[1]	15	4	4	7	23	24	16
Tanque Sisley	15	3	3	9	20	25	12
M Misiones (R)[1]	15	3	1	11	12	29	10
Cerro Largo (R)[1]	15	2	3	10	13	36	9

[1]The 3 teams with the worst points-per-game average over the 2 most recent seasons were relegated

CONCACAF

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Semi-finals

1st legs - Apr 1; 2nd legs - Apr 8/9
Alajuelense (CR) v Toluca (Mex) 0-1, 0-2 (agg 0-3)
Tijuana (Mex) v Cruz Azul (Mex) 1-0, 0-2 (agg 1-2)

Final

1st leg
Apr 15
Cruz Azul 0
Toluca 0
Ref: Garcia (Mex)
Cruz Azul: Allison - Flores, Loeschbor, Dominguez, Chavez, Rojas (Barrera 81), Castro, Torrado, Fabian, Formica (Emana 66), Pavone (Gimenez 67).
Toluca: Talavera - Gamboa, Galindo, Da Silva, Ponce, Brizuela (Benitez 84), Wilson Mathias, Rios, Velazquez, Salgueiro (Nava 86), Esquivel (Rojas 90+2).

2nd leg
Apr 23
Toluca 1 (Benitez 63)
Cruz Azul 1 (Pavone 41)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Rodriguez (Mex)
Agg 1-1; Cruz Azul on away goals
Toluca: Talavera - Rojas (Gamboa 78), Galindo, Da Silva, Ponce, Brizuela, Wilson Mathias, Rios, Velazquez, Salgueiro (Nava 46), Esquivel (Benitez 54).
Cruz Azul: Corona - Flores, Loeschbor, Dominguez, Chavez, Rojas (Perea 71), Castro, Torrado, Fabian (Cervantes 89), Formica (Gimenez 67), Pavone.

MEXICO

Clausura

Regular season
Apr 4: Morelia 1 Veracruz 1; Tijuana 3 Toluca 1.
Apr 5: America 1 Cruz Azul 2; Monterrey 2 Santos 2; Pachuca 1 Guadalajara 3; Leon 1 Queretaro 1; Atlas 0 Puebla 0.
Apr 6: Pumas 2 Chiapas 1; Atlante 0 Tigres 2.
Apr 11: Queretaro 1 Atlas 0.
Apr 12: Cruz Azul 2 Pachuca 2; Tigres 1 Tijuana 1; Chiapas 1 Monterrey 1; Veracruz 1 Pumas 1.
Apr 13: Puebla 0 America 1; Toluca 2 Leon 1; Guadalajara 1 Morelia 1; Santos 4 Atlante 3.
Apr 18: Morelia 5 Cruz Azul 1.
Apr 19: America 0 Queretaro 0; Santos 2 Chiapas 3; Pachuca 1 Puebla 2; Monterrey 4 Veracruz 1; Leon 3 Tigres 0; Atlas 1 Toluca 0.
Apr 20: Pumas 1 Guadalajara 0; Atlante 1 Tijuana 2.
Apr 25: Queretaro 3 Pachuca 4; Tijuana 1 Leon 2.
Apr 26: Veracruz 2 Santos 2; Cruz Azul 2 Pumas 1; Tigres 2 Atlas 1; Chiapas 5 Atlante 2.
Apr 27: Toluca 1 America 1; Puebla 3 Morelia 1; Guadalajara 0 Monterrey 1.

MEXICO – CLAUSURA: REGULAR – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cruz Azul (Q)	17	11	3	3	28	19	36
Toluca (Q)	17	10	2	5	25	14	32
Pumas (Q)	17	7	4	6	26	20	25
Santos (Q)	17	6	7	4	33	29	25
America (Q)	17	7	4	6	21	17	25
Pachuca (Q)	17	7	3	7	23	21	24
Tijuana (Q)	17	7	3	7	22	23	24
Leon (Q)	17	6	5	6	23	17	23
Chiapas	17	6	5	6	23	23	23
Monterrey	17	6	5	6	20	20	23
Morelia	17	5	6	6	21	20	21
Atlas	17	5	6	6	17	18	21
Queretaro	17	6	3	8	18	22	21
Tigres	17	5	6	6	13	17	21
Guadalajara	17	5	6	6	13	18	21
Puebla	17	4	6	7	14	19	18
Atlante (R)[1]	17	5	3	9	22	34	18
Veracruz	17	3	7	7	14	25	16

Top 8 entered championship play-offs
[1]Atlante relegated as the team with the worst points-per-game average over the 3 most recent seasons

Quarter-finals
1st legs - Apr 30/May 1; 2nd legs - May 3/4
America v Santos 5-3, 1-3
(agg 6-6, Santos on away goals)
Leon v Cruz Azul 1-1, 2-2
(agg 3-3, Leon on away goals)
Pachuca v Pumas 1-1, 4-2 (agg 5-3)
Tijuana v Toluca 0-0, 1-3 (agg 1-3)

Semi-finals
1st legs - May 7/8; 2nd legs - May 10/11
Leon v Toluca 1-0, 1-0 (agg 2-0)
Pachuca v Santos 2-0, 2-4
(agg 4-4, Pachuca on away goals)

Final, 1st leg
May 15
Leon 2 (Pena 33, Herrera og 76)
Pachuca 3 (Valencia 41, 60, Lozano 68)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Ramos

Final, 2nd leg
May 18
Pachuca 0
Leon 2 (Boselli 66, Gonzalez 111)
Aet[1]. **HT:** 0-0. **90mins:** 0-1. **Ref:** Chacon
Leon 4-3 on agg
[1]The away goals rule did not apply in Final

Holders...Evergrande (in yellow)

CHINA

Holders march on

Defending champions Guangzhou Evergrande eased into the AFC Champions League querter-finals, beating Cerezo Osaka 5-2 on aggregate. Despite not having triumphed away in this season's competition, they won 5-1 in the opening leg in Japan.

INDIA

Newcomers' success

Bengaluru were crowned national champions after just one season in the top flight. The club's success ended a run of eight successive I-League titles for clubs from the western state of Goa.

However, Bengaluru are just one of nine teams – plus newly promoted Royal Wahingdoh, who have a one-year exemption – to meet the requirements to compete in the 14-team competition which starts again in Dececmber.

INDONESIA

Striker dies

Persiraja striker Akli Fairuz died from injuries suffered during a league match.

Fairuz was kicked in the stomach by PSAP Sigli keeper Agus Rahman as they competed for a loose ball. He watched the rest of the game from the sideline but was later admitted to hospital, where he died from internal injuries.

JAPAN

City investment

English Premier League champions Manchester City

UNITED STATES

Regular season

Apr 5: Portland 4 Seattle 4; Montreal 2 New York Red Bulls 2; Chicago 2 Philadelphia 2; Columbus 0 Toronto 2; Vancouver 1 Colorado 2; DC United 2 New England 0; Houston 1 Dallas 4; Kansas City 0 Salt Lake 0.
Apr 6: Chivas 0 Los Angeles 3.
Apr 12: Toronto 0 Colorado 1; Montreal 1 Chicago 1; Philadelphia 2 Salt Lake 2; New England 2 Houston 0; DC United 1 New York Red Bulls 0; Dallas 2 Seattle 3; Los Angeles 1 Vancouver 0; Portland 1 Chivas 1.
Apr 13: San Jose 1 Columbus 1.
Apr 16: New York Red Bulls 2 Philadelphia 1.
Apr 19: Philadelphia 0 Houston 0; Chicago 1 New England 1; Colorado 0 San Jose 0; Vancouver 2 Los Angeles 2; Columbus 1 DC United 1; Dallas 2 Toronto 1; Kansas City 4 Montreal 0; Salt Lake 1 Portland 0; Chivas 1 Seattle 2.
Apr 23: New York Red Bulls 4 Houston 0.
Apr 26: Montreal 1 Philadelphia 0; Seattle 4 Colorado 1; DC United 4 Dallas 1; New England 2 Kansas City 0; Columbus 1 New York Red Bulls 1; Salt Lake 2 Vancouver 2; San Jose 1 Chivas 0.
Apr 27: Houston 1 Portland 1.
May 3: Toronto 1 New England 2; Vancouver 3 San Jose 2; Chicago 2 Salt Lake 3; Colorado 1 Los Angeles 0; Seattle 2 Philadelphia 1; Chivas 1 Houston 4; Portland 3 DC United 2.
May 4: Dallas 0 New York Red Bulls 1; Kansas City 2 Columbus 0.
May 7: Houston 1 Columbus 0; Seattle 2 Dallas 1; San Jose 0 Colorado 0.
May 10: Philadelphia 0 DC United 1; Montreal 0 Kansas City 3; New York Red Bulls 4 Chicago 5; Columbus 0 Vancouver 1; San Jose 2 Dallas 1.
May 11: Portland 1 Los Angeles 1; Colorado 1 Chivas 3; New England 5 Seattle 0; Houston 2 Salt Lake 5.
May 14: Kansas City 1 Philadelphia 2.
May 17: Toronto 2 New York Red Bulls 0; Philadelphia 3 New England 5; DC United 1 Montreal 1; Houston 1 Los Angeles 0; Dallas 1 Chivas 1; Salt Lake 2 Colorado 1; Seattle 1 San Jose 0; Portland 3 Columbus 3.
May 18: Chicago 2 Kansas City 1.
May 21: DC United 2 Houston 0; Los Angeles 2 Dallas 1.
May 23: Kansas City 2 Toronto 2.
May 24: New York Red Bulls 1 Portland 2; Vancouver 2 Seattle 2; Columbus 2 Chicago 0; New England 2 DC United 1; Colorado 4 Montreal 1; Salt Lake 0 Dallas 0.
May 25: Los Angeles 4 Philadelphia 1; San Jose 3 Houston 0.
May 27: Kansas City 1 New York Red Bulls 1.
May 28: Chivas 0 Portland 2.
May 31: Seattle 4 Salt Lake 0; Toronto 3 Columbus 2; Montreal 2 New England 0; DC United 1 Kansas City 0; Dallas 1 San Jose 2; Chivas 0 Philadelphia 3.
June 1: Chicago 1 Los Angeles 1; Colorado 3 Houston 0; Portland 3 Vancouver 4.

USA – REGULAR: EASTERN CONFERENCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
New England	13	7	2	4	21	16	23
DC United	13	6	3	4	18	14	21
Kansas City	14	5	4	5	19	14	19
Houston	15	5	2	8	16	27	17
Toronto	10	5	1	4	14	13	16
Columbus	13	4	4	5	17	17	16
New York RB	14	3	6	5	20	22	15
Philadelphia	15	3	5	7	19	24	14
Chicago	12	2	7	3	20	22	13
Montreal	12	2	4	6	11	22	10

34-round regular season (7x3 & 2x2 in own conference, 9x1 in western conference)

USA – REGULAR: WESTERN CONFERENCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Seattle	14	9	2	3	29	21	29
Salt Lake	13	6	6	1	23	17	24
Colorado	13	6	3	4	19	15	21
Vancouver	12	5	5	2	22	17	20
Dallas	15	5	3	7	23	24	18
Los Angeles	11	4	4	3	15	10	16
San Jose	12	4	4	4	15	13	16
Portland	14	3	7	4	23	24	16
Chivas	13	2	4	7	13	25	10

34-round regular season (8x3 in own conference, 10x1 in eastern conference)

Top 5 in both conferences will enter championship play-offs; no relegation from this league

AFRICA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group A

May 16: Al Hilal (Sud) 1 TP Mazembe (DRC) 0.
May 18: AS Vita (DRC) 2 Zamalek (Egy) 1.
May 24: Zamalek 2 Al Hilal 1.
May 25: TP Mazembe 1 AS Vita 0.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zamalek	2	1	0	1	3	3	3
Al Hilal	2	1	0	1	2	2	3
AS Vita	2	1	0	1	2	2	3
TP Mazembe	2	1	0	1	1	1	3

Group B

May 17: Esperance (Tun) 1 ES Setif (Alg) 2.
May 18: CS Sfaxien (Tun) 3 Al Ahly Benghazi (Lby) 1.
May 24: Al Ahly Benghazi 3 Esperance 2.
May 25: ES Setif 1 CS Sfaxien 1.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
CS Sfaxien	2	1	1	0	4	2	4
ES Setif	2	1	1	0	3	2	4
Al Ahly Ben'zi	2	1	0	1	4	5	3
Esperance	2	0	0	2	3	5	0

Remaining matchdays: *June 6-8, July 25-27, Aug 8-10, Aug 22-24*

Top 2 in both groups qualify for semi-finals

SOUTH AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Mamelodi S (C)	30	20	5	5	51	25	65
Kaizer Chiefs	30	19	6	5	43	17	63
Wits Univ	30	16	8	6	34	20	56
Orlando P'tes	30	13	7	10	30	22	46
SuperSport	30	12	8	10	38	36	44
Bloemfontein	30	10	13	7	35	32	43
Black Aces	30	12	7	11	34	33	43
Platinum Stars	30	11	9	10	32	32	42
AmaZulu	30	11	9	10	27	35	42
Maritzburg	30	10	8	12	34	37	38
Univ Pretoria	30	10	5	15	25	28	35
Ajax	30	9	8	13	27	36	35
Moroka Sw's	30	8	7	15	29	39	31
Free State St's	30	7	8	15	32	43	29
Polokwane[1]	30	7	7	16	31	43	28
G'n Arrows (R)	30	6	3	21	26	50	21

[1]Polokwane stay in top division after winning rel/prom play-off group

TUNISIA

TUNISIA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Esperance (C)	30	19	9	2	48	15	66
CS Sfaxien	30	17	6	7	36	20	57
Etoile Sahel	30	15	11	4	36	15	56
Club Africain	30	15	9	6	29	20	54
AS Marsa	30	12	6	12	28	27	42
CA Bizertin	30	9	14	7	29	20	41
Std Gabesien	30	9	13	8	27	23	40
JS Kairouan	30	8	11	11	26	25	35
Metlaoui	30	7	14	9	21	26	35
US Monastir	30	9	7	14	28	32	34
Hammam-Lif	30	9	7	14	20	32	34
EGS Gafsa	30	9	7	14	25	39	34
Std Tunisien	30	9	5	16	19	33	32
Olympique (R)	30	5	14	11	22	32	29
LPS Tozeur (R)	30	6	11	13	23	35	29
Grombalia (R)	30	6	8	16	23	46	26

ASIA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group A

Apr 2: Al Jazira (UAE) 0 Esteghlal (Irn) 1; Al Rayyan (Qat) 0 Al Shabab (Sau) 2.
Apr 16: Al Rayyan 2 Al Jazira 3; Al Shabab 2 Esteghlal 1.
Apr 23: Al Jazira 1 Al Shabab 2; Esteghlal 3 Al Rayyan 1.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP A – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Shabab (Q)	6	5	0	1	12	8	15
Al Jazira (Q)	6	3	1	2	12	10	10
Esteghlal	6	2	1	3	7	7	7
Al Rayyan	6	1	0	5	9	15	3

Group B

Apr 1: El Jaish (Qat) 2 Al Fateh (Sau) 0; Foolad Khouzestan (Irn) 1 Bunyodkor (Uzb) 0.
Apr 16: Bunyodkor 3 Al Fateh 2; Foolad Khouzestan 3 El Jaish 1.
Apr 23: Al Fateh 1 Foolad Khouzestan 5; El Jaish 1 Bunyodkor 2.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP B – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Foolad (Q)	6	4	2	0	11	3	14
Bunyodkor (Q)	6	2	2	2	7	7	8
El Jaish	6	2	2	2	6	6	8
Al Fateh	6	0	2	4	3	11	2

Group C

Apr 1: Tractor Sazi (Irn) 2 Al Ain (UAE) 2.
Apr 2: Al Ittihad (Sau) 3 Lekhwiya (Qat) 1.
Apr 15: Al Ittihad 2 Tractor Sazi 0; Lekhwiya 0 Al Ain 5.
Apr 22: Al Ain 1 Al Ittihad 1; Tractor Sazi 0 Lekhwiya 1.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP C – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Ain (Q)	6	3	2	1	14	7	11
Al Ittihad (Q)	6	3	1	2	8	6	10
Lekhwiya	6	2	1	3	5	10	7
Tractor Sazi	6	1	2	3	4	8	5

Group D

Apr 1: Al Ahli (UAE) 0 Sepahan (Irn) 0; Al Hilal (Sau) 5 Al Sadd (Qat) 0.
Apr 15: Al Ahli 0 Al Hilal 0; Sepahan 4 Al Sadd 0.
Apr 22: Al Hilal 1 Sepahan 0; Al Sadd 2 Al Ahli 1.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP D – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Hilal (Q)	6	2	3	1	12	7	9
Al Sadd (Q)	6	2	2	2	8	14	8
Al Ahli	6	1	4	1	6	6	7
Sepahan	6	2	1	3	9	8	7

Group E

Apr 2: Buriram United (Tha) 2 Cerezo Osaka (Jap) 2; Shandong Luneng (Chn) 2 Pohang Steelers (SKo) 4.
Apr 16: Buriram United 1 Shandong Luneng 0; Cerezo Osaka 0 Pohang Steelers 2.
Apr 23: Pohang Steelers 0 Buriram United 0; Shandong Luneng 1 Cerezo Osaka 2.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP E – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Pohang (Q)	6	3	3	0	11	6	12
Cerezo (Q)	6	2	2	2	10	9	8
Buriram Utd	6	1	3	2	5	9	6
Shandong	6	1	2	3	9	11	5

Group F

Apr 1: Central Coast Mariners (Aus) 1 Beijing Guoan (Chn) 0; Seoul (SKo) 2 Sanfrecce Hiroshima (Jap) 2.
Apr 16: Beijing Guoan 2 Sanfrecce Hiroshima 2; Central Coast Mariners 0 Seoul 1.
Apr 23: Sanfrecce Hiroshima 1 Central Coast Mariners 0; Seoul 2 Beijing Guoan 1.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP F – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Seoul (Q)	6	3	2	1	9	6	11
Sanfrecce (Q)	6	2	3	1	9	8	9
Beijing Guoan	6	1	3	2	7	8	6
Central Coast	6	2	0	4	4	7	6

Group G

Apr 2: Jeonbuk Motors (SKo) 1 Guangzhou Evergrande (Chn) 0; Yokohama F Marinos (Jap) 3 Melbourne Victory (Aus) 2.
Apr 15: Melbourne Victory 2 Guangzhou Evergrande 0; Yokohama F Marinos 2 Jeonbuk Motors 1.
Apr 22: Guangzhou Evergrande 2 Yokohama F Marinos 1; Jeonbuk Motors 0 Melbourne Victory 0.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP G – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Guangzhou (Q)	6	3	1	2	10	8	10
Jeonbuk (Q)	6	2	2	2	8	7	8
Melbourne V	6	2	2	2	9	9	8
Yokohama	6	2	1	3	7	10	7

Group H

Apr 1: Guizhou Renhe (Chn) 3 Ulsan Hyundai (SKo) 1; Kawasaki Frontale (Jap) 2 Western Sydney Wanderers (Aus) 1.
Apr 15: Guizhou Renhe 0 Kawasaki Frontale 1; Ulsan Hyundai 0 Western Sydney Wanderers 2.
Apr 22: Kawasaki Frontale 3 Ulsan Hyundai 1; Western Sydney Wanderers 5 Guizhou Renhe 0.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP H – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
W Sydney (Q)	6	4	0	2	11	5	12
Kawasaki (Q)	6	4	0	2	7	5	12
Ulsan Hyundai	6	2	1	3	8	10	7
Guizhou Renhe	6	1	1	4	4	10	4

Top 2 in each group qualified for 1st knockout round

1st knockout round

1st legs - May 6/7; 2nd legs - May 13/14
Al Ittihad v Al Shabab 1-0, 3-1 (agg 4-1)
Al Jazira v Al Ain 1-2, 1-2 (agg 2-4)
Al Sadd v Foolad Khouzestan
0-0, 2-2 (agg 2-2, Al Sadd on away goals)

have bought a stake in Yokohama F Marinos. They have already taken over Melbourne Heart and are starting new MLS team, New York City FC.

UAE

Coach sets new best

Al Ahli of Dubai won the domestic championship for a sixth time. Cosmin Olaroiu of Romania became the first coach to win the title three years in a row, having won it the previous two years with Al Ain.

NEW ZEALAND

OFC champions again

Auckland City qualified for a record sixth Club World Cup, beating Amicale 3-2 on aggregate in the OFC Champions League Final to win a third consecutive continental title.

Three-in-a-row...Olaroiu

Following a 1-1 draw in the first leg in Vanuatu, Auckland goalkeeper Tamati Williams saved a penalty from Colin Marshall in the return before Kensi Tangis put the visitors ahead. Ryan De Vries then equalised and Emiliano Tade scored the host's winner three minutes from time.

Bunyodkor v Al Hilal 0-1, 0-3 (agg 0-4)
Cerezo Osaka v Guangzhou Evergrande
1-5, 1-0 (agg 2-5)
Jeonbuk Motors v Pohang Steelers
1-2, 0-1 (agg 1-3)
Kawasaki Frontale v Seoul
2-3, 2-1 (agg 4-4, Seoul on away goals)
Sanfrecce Hiroshima v Western Sydney Wanderers
3-1, 0-2 (agg 3-3, West Sydney on away goals)

AUSTRALIA

Regular season

Apr 4: Adelaide 2 Melbourne Heart 2.
Apr 5: Newcastle 2 Melbourne Victory 2; Western Sydney 1 Brisbane 1; Perth 3 Central Coast 1.
Apr 6: Sydney 4 Wellington Phoenix 1.
Apr 11: Newcastle 2 Adelaide 0.
Apr 12: Wellington Phoenix 1 Melbourne Victory 4; Melbourne Heart 2 Western Sydney 3; Brisbane 0 Central Coast 2.
Apr 13: Sydney 2 Perth 1.

AUSTRALIA – REGULAR – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Brisbane (Q)	27	16	4	7	43	25	52
W Sydney (Q)	27	11	9	7	34	29	42
Central C't (Q)	27	12	6	9	33	36	42
Melb'ne V (Q)	27	11	8	8	42	43	41
Sydney (Q)	27	12	3	12	40	38	39
Adelaide (Q)	27	10	8	9	45	36	38
Newcastle	27	10	6	11	34	34	36
Perth	27	7	7	13	28	37	28
Wellington P	27	7	7	13	36	51	28
Melbourne H	27	6	8	13	36	42	26

Top 6 entered championship play-offs (1st & 2nd directly into semi-finals, 3rd to 6th into elimination finals); no relegation from this league

Elimination finals

Apr 18: Melbourne Victory 2 Sydney 1.
Apr 19: Central Coast 1 Adelaide 0.

Semi-finals

Apr 26: Western Sydney 2 Central Coast 0.
Apr 27: Brisbane 1 Melbourne Victory 0.

Final

May 4 - Brisbane (Suncorp)
Brisbane 2 (Berisha 86, Henrique 108)
Western Sydney 1 (Spiranovic 56)
Aet. **HT:** 0-0. **90mins:** 1-1. **Att:** 51,153. **Ref:** Green

IRAN

IRAN – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Foolad (C)	30	16	9	5	36	24	57
Persepolis[1]	30	16	8	6	34	15	55
Naft Tehran	30	15	9	6	39	23	54
Sepahan	30	14	12	4	36	20	54
Esteghlal T[1]	30	15	9	6	34	25	53
Tractor Sazi[1]	30	11	13	6	39	33	45
Malavan[1]	30	13	6	11	40	33	44
Saipa	30	7	14	9	26	31	35
Saba	30	8	9	13	32	38	33
Gostaresh	30	7	11	12	31	34	32
Rah Ahan	30	7	10	13	25	34	31
Esteghlal K	30	6	11	13	26	37	29
Zob Ahan	30	6	11	13	24	36	29
Fajr S'si (R)[2]	30	6	11	13	20	34	29
Damash[1] (R)	30	5	12	13	30	40	26
Mes (R)	30	1	19	10	21	36	22

[1]1pt deducted for fan misbehaviour
[2]Fajr Sepasi relegated after losing rel/prom play-off

JAPAN

Apr 6: Tokushima 0 Kawasaki 4; Nagoya 2 Sanfrecce 5; Albirex 0 Yokohama 0; Ventforet 0 Shimizu 1; Kashiwa 2 Cerezo 1; Omiya 0 Vissel 3; Gamba 0 Kashima 2; Tokyo 2 Sagan 1; Urawa 4 Vegalta 0.
Apr 11: Kawasaki 1 Kashiwa 1.
Apr 12: Cerezo 2 Gamba 2; Yokohama 0 Vegalta 2; Vissel 3 Tokushima 0; Nagoya 1 Urawa 2; Shimizu 2 Omiya 0; Kashima 1 Albirex 2; Sagan 2 Ventforet 0; Sanfrecce 1 Tokyo 0.
Apr 19: Vegalta 0 Sagan 3; Tokushima 0 Shimizu 4; Kashima 2 Vissel 3; Kashiwa 0 Yokohama 0; Tokyo 2 Cerezo 0; Gamba 2 Omiya 1; Urawa 1 Kawasaki 0; Ventforet 2 Nagoya 0.
Apr 20: Albirex 0 Sanfrecce 0.
Apr 26: Kashiwa 3 Urawa 2; Yokohama 0 Tokyo 1; Shimizu 1 Vegalta 0; Tokushima 1 Albirex 2; Nagoya 2 Sagan 3; Vissel 2 Cerezo 2; Kawasaki 2 Gamba 1; Omiya 0 Ventforet 2; Sanfrecce 0 Kashima 3.
Apr 29: Tokyo 0 Nagoya 1; Ventforet 0 Tokushima 1; Albirex 1 Vissel 1; Sagan 1 Sanfrecce 2; Kashima 2 Shimizu 1; Vegalta 0 Kawasaki 0; Urawa 1 Yokohama 0; Gamba 1 Kashiwa 2; Cerezo 1 Omiya 1.
May 3: Kashiwa 1 Kashima 0; Yokohama 2 Gamba 0; Tokushima 0 Vegalta 1; Kawasaki 2 Ventforet 0; Shimizu 0 Sagan 1; Vissel 0 Sanfrecce 0; Urawa 1 Tokyo 0; Omiya 2 Albirex 2; Nagoya 1 Cerezo 2.
May 6: Vegalta 4 Vissel 3; Tokyo 0 Omiya 1; Albirex 2 Shimizu 1; Kashima 1 Nagoya 2; Sagan 1 Kashiwa 0; Ventforet 0 Urawa 0; Gamba 3 Tokushima 0.
May 10: Nagoya 1 Gamba 2; Yokohama 1 Sagan 2; Sanfrecce 1 Shimizu 1; Tokushima 0 Tokyo 0; Kawasaki 4 Kashima 1; Cerezo 0 Vegalta 1; Vissel 1 Ventforet 0; Omiya 0 Urawa 2; Kashiwa 1 Albirex 0.
May 17: Urawa 1 Cerezo 0; Ventforet 3 Kashiwa 0; Shimizu 1 Vissel 1; Albirex 1 Nagoya 1; Sagan 1 Omiya 1; Tokyo 3 Gamba 0; Kashima 1 Tokushima 0.
May 18: Vegalta 1 Sanfrecce 0; Kawasaki 0 Yokohama 3.

JAPAN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Urawa	14	9	2	3	19	9	29
Sagan	14	9	1	4	23	12	28
Vissel	14	6	6	2	26	17	24
Kashima	14	8	0	6	25	16	24
Kashiwa	14	6	5	3	16	14	23
Sanfrecce	13	6	4	3	16	13	22
Albirex	14	5	7	2	14	12	22
Kawasaki	13	6	3	4	24	15	21
Shimizu	14	5	3	6	18	18	18
Tokyo	14	5	3	6	14	14	18
Vegalta	14	5	3	6	11	20	18
Yokohama	13	5	2	6	13	10	17
Cerezo	13	4	4	5	16	14	16
Ventforet	14	4	4	6	11	14	16
Nagoya	14	5	1	8	18	24	16
Gamba	14	4	3	7	14	19	15
Omiya	14	3	4	7	17	24	13
Tokushima	14	1	1	12	3	33	4

34-round season (17x2); bottom 3 will be relegated

Leading goalscorers

9 Pedro Junior (Vissel)
8 Yoshito Okubo (Kawasaki)
8 Yohei Toyoda (Sagan)
7 Marquinhos (Vissel)

OCEANIA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group A

Played in Lautoka, Fiji
Apr 9: Kiwi (Sam) 0 Waitakere United (NZ) 2; Solomon Warriors (Sol) 1 AS Pirae (Tah) 2.
Apr 12: AS Pirae 8 Kiwi 0; Waitakere United 1 Solomon Warriors 1.
Apr 15: Kiwi 0 Solomon Warriors 8; AS Pirae 3 Waitakere United 1.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP A – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
AS Pirae (Q)	3	3	0	0	13	2	9
Solomon W	3	1	1	1	10	3	4
Waitakere	3	1	1	1	4	4	4
Kiwi	3	0	0	3	0	18	0

Group B

Played in Lautoka, Fiji
Apr 8: Amicale (Van) 1 AS Dragon (Tah) 0; Auckland City (NZ) 3 Nadi (Fij) 0.
Apr 11: AS Dragon 0 Auckland City 3; Nadi 0 Amicale 6.
Apr 14: Nadi 0 AS Dragon 5; Amicale 1 Auckland City 0.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP B – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Amicale (Q)	3	3	0	0	8	0	9
Auckland (Q)	3	2	0	1	6	1	6
AS Dragon	3	1	0	2	5	4	3
Nadi	3	0	0	3	0	14	0

Group C

Played in Ba, Fiji
Apr 7: Tafea (Van) 3 Hekari United (PNG) 1; AS Magenta (NC) 0 Ba (Fij) 2.
Apr 10: Ba 4 Tafea 0; Hekari United 2 AS Magenta 2.
Apr 13: Tafea 1 AS Magenta 3; Ba 1 Hekari United 1.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP C – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ba (Q)	3	2	1	0	7	1	7
AS Magenta	3	1	1	1	5	5	4
Tafea	3	1	0	2	4	8	3
Hekari United	3	0	2	1	4	6	2

The 3 group winners and the runner-up with the best record qualified for the semi-finals

Semi-finals

1st legs - Apr 26/27; 2nd legs - May 3
Auckland City v AS Pirae 3-0, 1-2 (agg 4-2)
Ba v Amicale 1-2, 0-0 (agg 1-2)

Final

1st leg
May 10
Amicale 1 (Fred 79)
Auckland City 1 (Tade 29)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Zitouni (Tah)

2nd leg
May 18
Auckland City 2 (De Vries 67, Tade 87)
Amicale 1 (Tangis 45+1)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Hauata (Tah)
Auckland City 3-2 on agg

KEY TO TABLES
(C) = champions
(Q) = qualified for next stage
(R) = relegated

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World Soccer's GREAT TEAMS

Argentina 1978

Cesar Luis Menotti's side were the last team to win the World Cup on South American soil

Expectant...Argentina line up before what was only their second World Cup Final, having lost the previous one to Uruguay in 1930

The last time the World Cup was held in South America, the host nation were crowned champions against a backdrop of white ticker tape in Buenos Aires.

Cesar Luis Menotti's Argentina beat a Holland side – minus Johan Cruyff – 3-1 after extra-time at the Estadio Monumental with two goals from Mario Kempes and one from Daniel Bertoni.

Having navigated their way through the opening-group stage with two wins and a defeat against Italy, the hosts progressed to the second phase, which comprised two groups, with the winners of each meeting in the Final.

Despite playing some of the tournament's most entertaining football, Menotti's side rode their luck at times. In the first game of the second phase, Kempes punched a header from Poland's Grzegorz Lato off the line – an act that, in those days, didn't merit a yellow card, let alone a red one. Kempes remained on the pitch, the resulting penalty was saved and Argentina went on to win 2-0.

Then, in the final group game, with a place in the Final at stake, Argentina needed to beat Peru by four goals to progress. Leading 2-0 at half-time against a team that had nothing to play for, Menotti's men eventually won 6-0 in a game that would spark numerous rumours and conspiracy theories.

Argentina were too good for Holland in the Final, and as Eric Batty wrote in *World Soccer*: "Argentina won the World Cup because they deserved to, and they showed everyone how the game should be played, with clever players going forward all the time and never mind about marking the opposition stars." WS

THE COACH AND HIS TEAM

Cesar Luis Menotti

The chain-smoker took over after the 1974 World Cup, having led Huracan to the domestic title. He built a team from all areas of the country, rather than just the big two from Buenos Aires: Boca Juniors and River Plate. He remained in charge until the end of the 1982 World Cup and went on to coach Barcelona – where he reacquainted himself with Diego Maradona, who he had omitted from the 1978 squad as a 17-year-old.

Tactics

Menotti set out to play a passing brand of football, with most attacks building from the full-backs. Galvan would sit deep, while Passarella would often join the attack at set-pieces. The key figure was Ardiles, whose energy levels and passing ability were second to none. This allowed the coach to use two wingers to feed the powerful duo of Luque and Kempes down the middle.

THE STARTING XI

Goalkeeper
Ubaldo Fillol
Nicknamed "The Duck", he was voted keeper of the tournament ahead of Dino Zoff and Sepp Maier.

Right-back
Jorge Olguin
A centre-back by trade, he was converted into an attacking full-back by Menotti.

Centre-half
Luis Galvan
The rock in Argentina's defence for eight years. He later set up a coaching school.

Centre-half
Daniel Passarella
Captain of the team, he was also in the 1986-winning squad. Was coach at the 1998 World Cup.

Left-back
Alberto Tarantini
Youngest in the team at 22, he could play either full-back position. Later joined Birmingham City.

Right-winger
Daniel Bertoni
Struggled with fitness due to an injury prior to the tournament, but scored the third goal in the Final.

Midfielder
Osvaldo Ardiles
Energetic and cultured, he later joined Tottenham Hotspur with squad member Ricky Villa.

Midfielder
Americo Gallego
Tough-tackling defensive midfielder who assisted Passarella in coaching the national side.

Left-winger
Oscar Ortiz
Not a regular, but he played in the second game and took some part in every match after.

Forward
Mario Kempes
Prolific scorer for Valencia in Spain before finishing the World Cup as top scorer with six goals.

Forward
Leopoldo Luque
Scored four goals in the tournament despite missing two games with an elbow injury.

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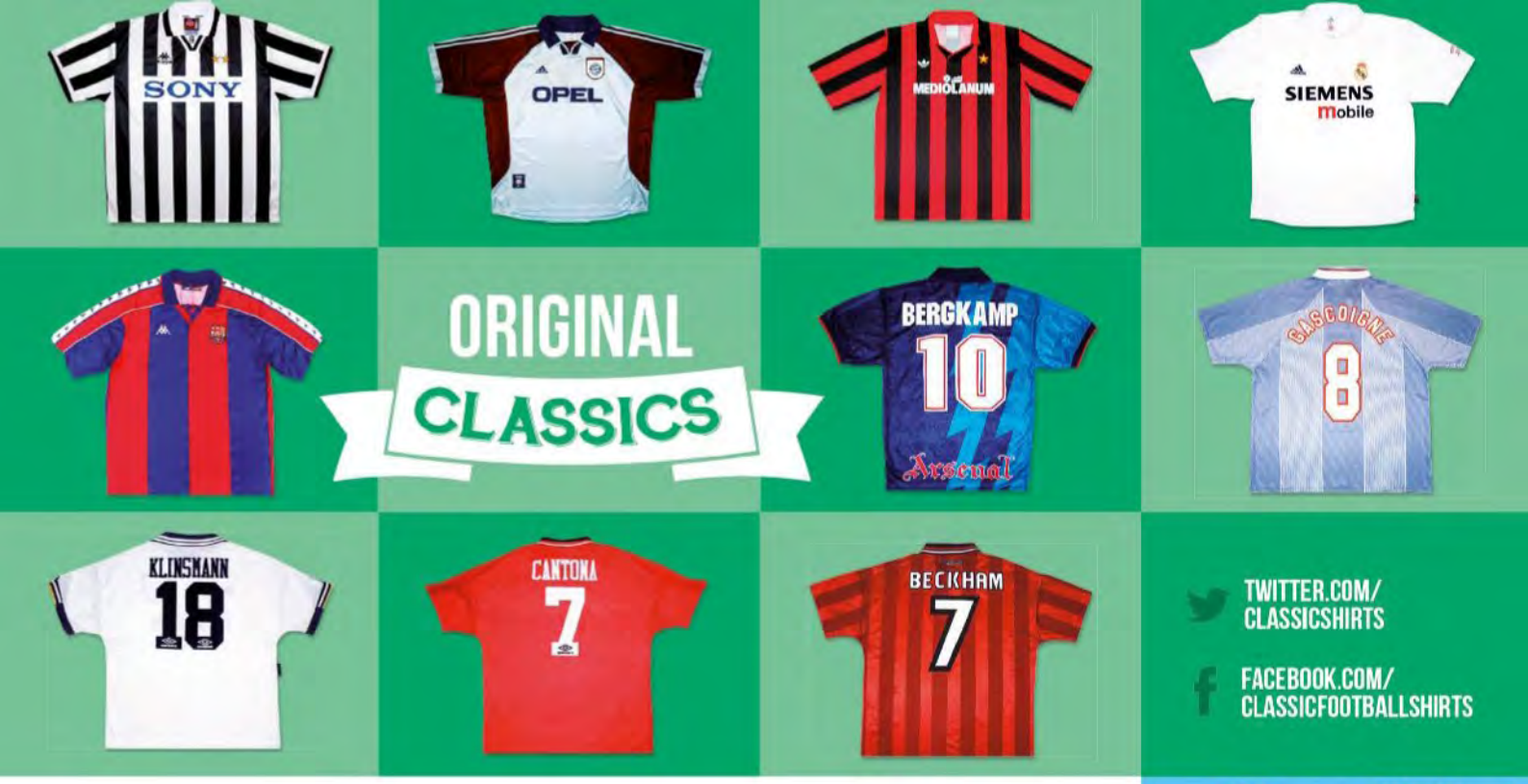

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